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Also:

"The Rigged Society," two comments on the TV scandals; "Steel Strikes as Lockouts," *James O'Connor*; "Alexander Herzen—Ancestor in Defeat,' *George Woodcock*; "A Program for the Nation," *Norman Mailer*

WINTER 1960 **75c**

DISSENT

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AMONG OURSELVES

● *Shortly before going to press, Grove Press informed us that, with first-printing copies of* Voices of Dissent *virtually exhausted, a second edition would be published in February. See ad, back cover!*

● We are happy to report that the press run of our last issue—a special number on the American trade unions—was the largest in the history of DISSENT. Many special orders came in, and as a result the issue is sold out. Only new subscribers can be taken care of.

● In December every subscriber received a letter bringing his attention to a special problem the magazine faces. It is that the proportion of subscribers to total sales is not as high as it should be. The income we receive on subscriptions is, from every point of view, the most satisfactory one. This point is worth stressing for those of our readers who purchase copies casually. At no extra cost and at greater convenience to yourself, you can do the magazine a considerable favor by *subscribing*. It is also helpful if you take a two-year sub: this saves you a dollar and us a lot of extra clerical work and expense. And it is helpful if you renew your sub promptly, for similar reasons.

But most of all: *try to get a friend, a casual reader, to subscribe and become a regular reader.*

● DISSENT *forums* and discussion groups have gotten off to a lively start this year in New York City and Boston. In New York there was a well-attended forum on co-existence at which Seymour Melman and Irving Howe were the main speakers, and brief comments were heard from Herman Singer, Milton Sachs, Roy Finch and Henry Pachter. A high point of the forum was the showing of slides by Seymour Melman, who had just returned from Russia where he made a close study of machine-tool production. In Boston there was also a lively discussion on the same topic.

A later discussion in New York's Judson Memorial Church, at which the speakers were Rev. Steven Chinlund, Harold Rosenberg, Irving Howe and Norman Mailer, with Rev. Howard Moody as moderator, was attended by over 500 people; scores were turned away.

Subscribers in the New York and Boston areas will be notified of further discussions.

● It's been pleasant to see the tremendously enthusiastic reviews that Harold Rosenberg's book *The Tradition of the New* (Horizon Press; $4.95) has been receiving in all the serious journals. A number of the essays in the book, including the now-famous "Couch Liberalism and the Guilty Past," first appeared in DISSENT, and it gives us all pleasure they are now reaching a new audience.

Norman Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* (Putnam; $5), a collection of his stories, miscellaneous pieces and essays, including the also now-famous "The White Negro" and other items which first appeared in DISSENT, has just come out. We have a standing rule not to review books by editors of the magazine; but that doesn't mean that we can't tell you that they're worth reading.

● *For the next issue* we plan to feature a section on the new problems and changing attitudes of Youth, with most of the contributors themselves young. And we are working, for next year, on a special issue about New York City.

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DISSENT

VOLUME VII
NUMBER 1

WINTER 1960

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A QUARTERLY OF SOCIALIST OPINION

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Miscellany

Mendes-Frances Gives "Reasons for a Choice"

ONE OF THE MORE interesting political events of the past few months was passed over in virtual silence by the American press: the decision of Pierre Mendès-France, former premier of France, to join the Autonomous Socialist Party.

For an appreciation of this event, a few words of background are necessary. Some months ago, a considerable section of the French Socialist Party (SFIO), disgusted with the compromising policy of the Mollet leadership in regard to Algeria, decided to break from the SFIO and form an organization of their own. These Socialists, who included such respected figures as André Philip and René Blum, set up the Autonomous Socialist Party. It should be stressed that this split did not, like all too many unfortunate predecessors, follow the usual "right-left" lines. What, in the view of the Autonomous Socialists, was here involved was nothing less than an elementary sense of democratic and socialist honor. There was perhaps some ground for skepticism, since this was hardly the first such pronouncement in French radical politics during the past few decades.

But what now makes it seem at least possible that such a trend toward reunion of the democratic left without the Communists will occur in France is that Mendès-France has decided to join the Autonomous Socialist Party. For some years Mendès-France has suffered from the lack of a coherent political force behind him. He has been a nominal leader of the Radical Socialist Party, traditionally the party of French lower middle class interests, anti-clericalism and parliamentarism. This party, however, has suffered much discredit during the past two decades, and Mendès-France found himself, undeservedly, tied to a dying organization.

By his decision to join the Autonomous Socialist Party and to declare himself a socialist, Mendès-France apparently hoped to reverse the process of splintering and atomization which has afflicted the democratic left. He is, no doubt, looking forward to the post-Gaullist political struggle which awaits France. Reports indicate that several thousand persons, including many youth, immediately followed Mendès-France into the ASP.

Before joining the ASP, Mendès-France spoke to a gathering of still-active members of the Radical party, in order to explain his decision. Below, taken from the French weekly *L'Express*, we quote a few passages from his talk, entitled "The Reasons for a Choice":

•

SOME OF OUR FRIENDS have asked us: "That party [the ASP] is a Marxist party . . . Are you prepared to adhere to this or that among the Marxist conceptions—to the abolition of private property," etc. etc.?

These questions deserve straight answers.

First of all as regards freedom, which is our inheritance as republicans, as old Radicals, as descendants of those who have been called—sometimes with ill-applied irony—the great ancestors:

In 1789 an economic system founded, as you know, on the medieval guilds was destroyed so that freedom could prevail. At that time, political freedom and economic renewal required a great push in the direction of what used to be called liberalism.

But is is obvious that the situation of 1960 is quite different: economic power, the power of money, the great corporations issuing from 19th century liberalism, have become obstacles to political freedom.

Do we really live—as we believe—under a regime of freedom, when the freedom of the press applies only to those who can afford to found and maintain a newspaper? We proclaim the right to strike. But does it really exist under a regime which exercises a continuous pressure on the working class through recessions and threats of unemployment? The right to strike is rather theoretical than practical here, at least in certain periods. Do we really enjoy freedom of speech and free elections if men of means can fool and mislead the people? . . .

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THE RIGGED SOCIETY

I. Murray Hausknecht

The value of a socialist orientation to contemporary events is demonstrated by the most unlikely people. In the course of his *mea culpa* in Washington the head of the Columbia Broadcasting System set forth the framework for understanding the quiz show scandal: "The fact of the matter is that the advertiser who picks up the check is entitled to his commercial. Furthermore, our whole economy rests upon mass production, and mass production requires mass distribution, and television plays a key role in mass distribution." Since television is primarily a business the governing principles which determine how and what shall be produced are the same as those in other areas of the economic structure. And among the most important of these is the "rigging principle" which has reached its best known form in the automobile industry.

There it is known as planned obsolescence. The product is specifically designed to last—and to satisfy the needs of the consumer—for a limited time. Along with planning a limited life for the product there is an attempt to create a limited demand. That is, the function of advertising is to cultivate a desire for a product, sustain it almost to the point where the market has been satisfied, and then restimulate it all over again for a new model of the same product. Planned obsolescence is most successful when the two manipulative processes mesh: the car breaks down just as the desire has been restimulated. In short, selling to a mass market depends upon the rigging of both the product and the market.

THE RIGGING of a product, be it car or quiz show, is facilitated by the very nature of the market or audience to be reached. Effective control over the exploitation and manipulation of persons would require the existence of some organized community, in the broadest sense of that term. But a mass market or audience is by definition merely an aggregate of isolated individuals unrelated in any meaningful way. Such an audience cannot make the formal morality of the society a morality which effectively controls behavior. This leaves the way open for the counter-norm, the rigging principle, to become, in practice, the dominant morality. Indeed, the appearance of this norm is inevitable, since rigging is an important means of controlling the risks inherent in a

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"free market." In other words, given the structure of American business and society there was not only no reason why the quiz shows should not be rigged, there were good "sound" reasons deeply rooted in the social structure why they should be.

Indeed, the quiz shows *had* to be rigged, since any kind of audience generates its own imperatives. If a mass audience is merely an aggregate of isolated individuals, then the only way of attracting it is by a gimmick. The model for the gimmicks of a mass society is pornography, sex abstracted from a human context. Being designed primarily to evoke crude sensations, the gimmicks quickly lose their effectiveness and must be elaborated in order to restimulate the jaded.

The quiz show was a gimmick that relied on the crude excitement generated by the "suspense" of competition. The other satisfactions which come from games, e.g., watching an exercise of skill, etc., were unobtainable. Therefore, the producer, like the pornographer, had constantly to search for ways of heightening the sensations of his primitive gimmick; and that could only be done by rigging the game.

THE RIGGING process was much more elaborate than merely arranging who was to win. The more subtle part of the process was the manipulation of persons, and this was essential both to the success of the shows and to the maintenance of television as an effective part of the system of mass distribution.

The technique which has been evolved may be called, to paraphrase Kenneth Burke, stimulation by incongruity. It consists of transposing persons from contexts appropriate to their styles of life into contexts that are sharply inappropriate. The best current illustration involves Charles Van Doren, a member of a noted literary family and a college instructor who becomes a participant in an idiotic show fundamentally subversive of the meaning of intellectual work. There are many reasons why individuals will allow themselves to be manipulated and used as instruments for the mass distribution of goods, but one of these reasons is related to the long range consequences of stimulation by incongruity.

The reception of anything addressed to an audience depends upon whether the audience is prepared to receive both the content and the form. But at the same time the content and the form help create and mold the audience. Thus, while the rise of the novel is related to the rise of the middle class, by embodying the values and orientations of that class the novel created and shaped its public. Similarly, television creates and shapes its own audience; an audience that is not a class audience or any other kind of coherent public but a mass audience. Stimulation by incongruity is a means of molding and maintaining this type of audience.

In commenting on this technique once before I pointed out that one of its consequences is a blurring of the symbolic significance of persons (DISSENT, Winter, 1957). Persons like Van Doren perceived in his appropriate context represent alternative styles of life, levels of taste, esthetic criteria, etc.; in short, value systems about which publics may be formed. A blurring of these distinctions obscures the choices and makes it impossible for publics to rise out of the mass audience. Individuals place themselves in the hands of the riggers, because their

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own sensitivity to differences between value systems and the consequences of a transposition has been eroded simply through living in a mass society.

WHILE THE EXPOSURE of the riggers and the rigged was inevitable, it has an important unintended consequence. One way of maintaining a mass audience is to breed the conditions which make it impossible for individuals to transcend their isolation. It is impossible to break through one's isolation from others when one is suspicious and distrustful of them. For the mass audience the quiz show scandal confirms the necessity for cynicism.

But the greater the isolation the more difficult it is to maintain a sense of one's identity, and therefore the mass audience is an anxious audience. Yet this anxiety is a necessity for successful mass distribution, since the fundamental attraction of the rigged product is that it will help prop up the wavering ego structure. Thus, exposure and investigation of rigging can be regarded, paradoxically, as the necessary last act for the rigged products of television.

THE QUIZ SHOW scandal was most terrifying to those disenchanted with mass culture, despite the fact that it confirmed their vision of our society. The terror is rooted in the recognition that the vision is the reality; that, alas, the harshest things we have said in our attacks upon mass culture now prove to be more true than even we had realized.

2. Jay Bentham & Bernard Rosenberg

By now there is a whole repertoire of responses to the quiz fix. One hears a muffled *mea culpa* from the fixed and the fixers; some simulate indignation or cry on cue, while others demonstrate their know-how more creatively. One contestant, taking more time before the House Oversight Committee than he had on TV, viewed the congressional inquiry as an occasion "to empty his soul." The process might have taxed a Zen Master's patience.

To the "Old Pros" on Ad Alley it's all hocus-pocus. They know better. So do at least two witnesses, although one could bring himself to say so only from his sanctuary in Mexico. What they know—and Public Relations will eventually make it real for us all—is that until a disturbed young man upset the apple cart everyone was happy, that show biz is show biz, that illusion is its essence, that no crime was committed, and that we were all the richer in contentment or cash before this hullabaloo started.

The fix produced drama, excitement, battles, ties, cliff hangings and colossal audiences. In spite of an untoward interruption, the quiz show was a consummate example of program control designed to yield maximum ratings. Its lessons will not be lost. The prolonged contest between an *idiot savant* and a series of better-educated contestants was a master-stroke that by itself would justify the whole enterprise. Rehearsed quizes merely served to guarantee that there would be no great intrusion on the high drama that TV evokes to keep men from being left alone with their daily existence. The audience got its kicks.

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And the sponsor got his rating. Let no one tell the Revson brothers that a rating is to be sneezed at; not after the spectacular increase in Revlon sales and in the price of Revlon stock. Similar benefits accrued to other sponsors, off whom ad agencies were better able to batten than ever before. The networks got theirs in the form of higher income produced by successful shows. Since televiewers are loath to switch channels (this is the age in which Bell Telephone offers you "a beautiful way to save steps" by installing a phone in every room) they continued to watch other programs on the same station after their favorite quiz, thereby strengthening the preferred network's total line-up.

Packagers and producers were able to sell their wares for fabulous sums —and for capital gains. The network doors opened wide for them and for their retainers, to whom high-paying, prestigious positions were suddenly available. As for the contestants, who will deny that, by and large, they were well paid for their work?

So WHO GOT HURT, Madison Avenue wants to know? There were no economic liabilities to anyone connected with the operation. You had to be a psychopathic character, a petty sneak thief or an ambitious Congressman, probably owning a piece of the industry yourself, to louse it all up. From this point of view, irresponsible politicians forced at least a hundred persons to perjure themselves and to suffer possible reprisals. None of the principals was damaged by the fix until it was revealed. The scandal has cast a suspicion of executive incompetence upon the top officials of CBS and NBC who presumably did not know what took place in their own shops. It has had a negative effect on Revlon stock and might even harm Revlon sales. It stirs up mess after mess, and still further investigation which may not be easy to stop, although the consequences could be harmful to any number of ad men, journalists, members of regulatory commissions, public relations counselors and their clients. Business for everybody would have been better without the exposés.

Within its own framework, this interpretation of the fix is perfectly logical. The quizes did accomplish their purpose: to deliver high volume advertising at relatively low cost. Unhappily for all concerned, the framework is inadequate.

That the issue transcends money is evident wherever people express shock and disbelief when confronted with the guilt of their popular TV heroes. This reaction can only be understood as a by-product of the psychological identification so skillfully fostered by the producers of successful quiz shows.

For the popularity of such shows was based on a well-nigh universal appeal: that those who were economically unequipped, the underdogs and the over-specialized could beat the system. The cobbler, the professor, the teamster, the soldier, the subteenager—each in possession of nonconvertible knowledge yoked to a fabulous memory, an unusual hobby or an anomolous interest—could outwit the professional money man, and could do so without the routine backstabbing of business.

These appeals and identifications have made symbols of those who were allowed to enjoy a certain profit in exchange for the interest they focussed on goods manufactured by advertisers who paid them. Charles Van Doren, the supreme symbol of them all, has

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asserted that this greatest crime consisted in permitting himself to be a symbol. He misrepresented himself as a mnemonically superlative symbol of the disinterested quest for truth when, in fact, he was a person with the same faulty memory we all have, regardless of education.

At the simplest level Van Doren personifies a fundamental, though peculiar, American attitude which fuses the exaltation of money as an ultimate value with deep skepticism about the possibility of acquring much of it by work. The Protestant Ethic has been dead for some time; Mr. Van Doren has helped to bury it.

THERE IS MORE to the story. Else the quiz scandal, and most especially the confessions, would have failed to attain their full dramatic impact. After all, it is not so extraordinary for a crook to perjure himself, be caught in the perjury, and finally confess and pay for his sins.

Van Doren's Dramatic Ritual did not reach its climax during his superb performance in the isolation booth, nor yet on the stand as a penitent. It had to do much more meaningfully with the role he had cast for himself and into which he was cast by Congressional investigators and other witnesses who left him no choice but to confess.

Charles Van Doren was forced to act out a role as old as civilization itself. In classical Greek tragedy, the hero is defeated after challenging the gods—not by the gods but by a weakness in himself. Only after defeat does he achieve true heroic stature. He recognizes his fatal flaw, comes to terms with it and surmounts the defeat that has been inflicted upon him. Van Doren, when he took flight into the New England wilderness, there to search his soul—aided by a letter from a simple old woman (not to say legal and public relations counsel)—had a spiritual experience which enabled him to see the error of his ways, to make a clean breast of sins that were already documented, and thus to emerge as a cleaner, newer, even reborn and transfigured hero, worthy of the stentorian benediction his interrogators conferred upon him.

Everyone can identify with Van Doren. All his countrymen, and not they alone, understand the temptations inherent in fame, fortune, excitement and adulation. Who, being blameless, can cast the first stone?

FOR SOME YEARS it has been the writers' conviction that in modern American society there is a secret understanding, shared by almost everyone and obliquely expressed by the mass media only in tabloids and exposé magazines, that all public life and all public institutions are a fraud. Contemporary society itself is widely assumed to be fixed.

Among those who are deprived of a share in the institutionalized fraud, there is likely to be a feeling of resentment, coupled with cynicism and delight in the downfall of the upper-frauds. None of this precludes a vicarious, and equally common, enjoyment of the fruits of that fraud once it has been exposed. It is in rising to these complex emotions that the scandal sheet and the yellow press thrive.

At the same time, those on or near the top are privately willing to concede that public life is a fraud, but they hug to themselves and *entre nous,* among the few intimates in their milieu, the pleasantly guilty secret. The essence of this secret is that they have mastered the sales, public rela-

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tions, personality, administrative and financial tricks of "beating the system" while publicly extolling its virtues. Their cynicism is practical.

The quiz fix, then, stands as a symbol for that much greater fix which nearly everyone admits to. Van Doren was one of the "unfortunate suckers" who got caught up in the complexities of an ubiquitous process. Since he was trapped and given the opportunity to confess, we can now endow him with the power of confessing for the rest of us the sins which we cannot publicly confess. So that even if you condemn him, it is hard not to feel some compassion for Van Doren. In a symbolic sense he dramatizes the confession of everyone who profits from the operations of a fixed society. And those who do not profit can see in Van Doren's failure an attempt, almost successful, to beat the system. Besides, from this angle of vision, he did not entirely fail. He had a merry ride, has salvaged some fixed assets, and has been officially assured that his future will be brilliant.

Americans and Englishmen have traditionally held to the view that public life should be kept clean, that a man's public reputation is paramount no matter what his private vices may be. By contrast, Europeans have tended to be cynical about public life and more insistent on personal honor, the integrity of one's private life. Once upon a time, in the U. S. and even in Hollywood, the public revelation of sin could lead to banishment. The Second World War and its aftermath have changed all that. Senator Truman exposed war-time corruption and President Truman suffered the inroads of corruption. General Eisenhower who opted for such cleanliness as only a hound's tooth knew, suffered Dick Nixon's slip in his first campaign and for a short time had to resume a modicum of policy-making with the disgrace of Sherman Adams. For some years, Americans have seen their public figures tarnished with the same sins many of them would like the opportunity to enjoy. This is why the rite of public confession increasingly creates sympathy and success—for those who confess totally, dramatically and on time.

The scandalous behavior of Errol Flynn, Lana Turner, Ingrid Bergman and Dick Nixon has not resulted in any loss of popularity for these public figures. It should be of solace to Van Doren that Nixon's "Checkers" speech came exactly seven years, almost to the day, before the quiz scandal. In 1952 Nixon nearly got dumped from the GOP ticket because it was still uncertain how much a sinner could brazen it out after his misdeeds had been publicized. One telecast later the misgivings of Eisenhower's advisers were proved to be unwarranted.

THE CONTINUOUS public exposure of our heroes may well mean that sin has become more tolerable not only in private but in public life. To the extent that we identify with such figures we are likely to make fewer demands upon ourselves—and upon each other.

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the process we have described here is a self-contained one, a sort of equilibrium between deceit and revelation which might, to parody Marx, be described as Fix-Confession-Fix. On the face of things, this may seem true; but we suggest that each revelation of TV deceit, each announcement of corruption in government, each discovery that municipal inspectors connive in filching New York's poor

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of their proper weight of meat, must lead to a deeper social malaise, a profounder sense of *je m'en fiche,* a more crippling kind of cynicism. It is not only that corruption is warp and woof of our society: that is an old story. But the kind of corruption we have lately been witnessing testifies to something even more damning about our society: that an increasingly large number of people are doomed to "work" which they know to be rotten, wasteful, needless, soul-destroying. What we have been seeing these past few months is but a sympton of this terrible fact. It makes people sick to have to live in a sick society and cry health!

STEEL STRIKES AS LOCKOUTS

James O'Connor

No one has argued the omnipresence of the law of supply and demand more persuasively than businessmen themselves—spokesmen for the steel industry not excluded. It is therefore ironic that steel succeeded last summer in accomplishing what had been denied as a possibility: The law of supply and demand—through the use of the strike as lockout—was temporarily repealed.

With an eye to the enormous profit margins in steel, not a few observers have implied that what we witnessed was indeed a lockout. Steel could well have afforded to grant immediately a substantial wage increase, they argued, on the basis of productivity gains, as well as current profits. The industry's refusal to bargain realistically implied that it would just as soon close shop for a few months. To steel's reply that a wage increase would have been inflationary, they responded with the unanswered and unanswerable question: If you are so concerned about inflation, why not lower prices?

But why did the industry *want* a lockout? This is the question that so far has not been raised, except by inference. The liberal view—that the strike was a showdown battle over the issue of work rules and other "managerial prerogatives" is partially true and certainly necessary for a full understanding of the strike; but it needs supplementing. A more strictly economic interpretation, such as I will here suggest, has the value of revealing a sequence of events linking the recent strike with that of the summer of 1956.

THE STEEL INDUSTRY, for purposes of analysis, can be treated as a monopoly. There is not, it is true, one seller of steel, but many in the industry; yet there is a price leader (U.S. Steel) on whom the other firms depend for their pricing policies.

Two crucial facts confront the price leader. One is the relationship between costs and demand, from which can be derived a price (and output) which will maximize total profits. Second is the obvious but seldom remembered fact that the higher the

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price, the smaller will be the demand for any commodity. Like most goods and services, substitutes are available for steel in many of its uses; and if prices are abnormally high, the demand for steel—unlike that for food, for example—can often (with time) be postponed altogether.

Suppose now that the price leader has found a price and level of output which maximizes profits. The "price followers" will enjoy relatively more or less profits on the basis of this price, depending upon their own unit costs. Suppose also that the leader's costs suddenly increase sharply; his immediate response—given that the cost-demand nexus which maximizes profits has been altered—is to raise prices. If the demand for steel shared the characteristics of, say, that for cigarettes, steel sales would fall off immediately as consumers adjust their purchases to the new price. And that would be the end of the story.

However, unlike buyers of Brand A cigarettes who can promptly take their business to Brand B, purchasers of steel have made commitments to *their* customers which have to be met. Thus, while they would like to reduce their purchases of steel at the higher price, they are unable to do so in the short-run, and must buy—until their own contractual obligations have been fulfilled—the same quantity of steel at the new price which they had been just willing to buy at the old. The steel industry, meanwhile, enjoys artificially large sales at the going price, and with them, artificially high profits.

Once steel purchasers have met their commitments—after a period of a few months—the demand for steel at the new price tends to decline acutely, forcing the price leader either to lower prices to stimulate demand anew or reduce the scale of operations (cut back output). Inevitably, given the almost pathological fear on the part of steel of lowering prices, it is the latter course which is the more attractive. The decision to reduce the level of production immediately poses a new question: How can it be done? At present, with the old cartel solutions ruled out by the anti-trust laws, the answer is to remain unmoved when confronted with union demands (recall that last summer the industry refused to budge an inch on the wage issue, even though the union proposals were relatively moderate) and provoke a strike that will serve as a lockout. This solution has the extra advantage of relieving the industry of the burden of paying out Supplementary Unemployment Insurance Benefits to large numbers of workers.

AT THIS POINT the facts need looking into. First, the 1956 strike: Back in July, 1955, the Federal Reserve index of steel prices, following a year of relative stability, took a jump of five and a half per cent. Steel output, however, continued to rise until the beginning of 1956 (steel purchasers were fulfilling their contractual obligations); at year's end, profits as a percentage of sales were 7.9%, highest since the war year of 1951. Then what would ordinarily be interpreted as a rather strange development occurred. In the middle of a boom period—when it could be expected to continue its rise—output, which had been about 2.4 million tons per week, fell slowly, with one or two brief interruptions, to about 2.25 million tons in the middle of June, 1956. *In the heart of a boom the demand for steel had actually fallen off!* On July 1, with the industry unmoved by union demands, a strike began which was to last thirty-four days. This was the adjustment

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that the steel industry required.

The events leading up to the current strike were, with one important modification, quite similar. While early 1956 was a boom period, we had come out of the previous recession in late 1954 and 1955. Thus the pressure of cyclical demand was not as intense as it was during the first six months of 1959; recall that the upswing from the last recession began only in late 1958.

Again a substantial increase in steel prices one year before the strike. Again output continued to rise for a time, until October, 1958, when it leveled off—again in the face of a big cyclical push—remaining steady until January, 1959.

The impact of the cyclical upswing, however, temporarily restimulated demand, and, with the help of some stockpiling (why was everyone so sure of a strike months ahead of time?) output rose to an average of 2.6 million tons weekly from April to mid-June. Shortly after, the strike began, surprising no one. An adjustment was definitely in order. Perhaps the industry would have preferred to wait a few more months, but the expiration of the union contract offered an opportunity too good to be passed up.

Looked at from a different angle, the same conclusion emerges: Suppose that average weekly demand for steel at "normal" prices would have been 2.0 million tons (I bias this estimate downward for the sake of emphasis). Then "stockpile" steel was demanded at the rate of .6 million tons weekly (2.6 minus 2.0) over a period of approximately two months; total, about 5.4 million tons, or *less than three weeks normal supply*. Yet the strike lasted a full two months before steel users began to feel any pinch. Even a month later, there was nothing that could be called a serious shortage. Clearly, the demand for steel at the going (monopolistic) price was declining, despite the pressure of cyclical demand.

By the time this reaches print, the Taft-Hartley injunction will have expired. In my view, the industry—having resolved the inequality between demand and capacity—will have begun genuine negotiations on the wage issue, with a settlement acceptable to the union as the probable outcome. How—if at all—the issue of "managerial prerogatives" will be resolved, it is difficult to say. The compromise reached with Kaiser Steel, calling for a joint labor-management committee to deal further with the problem of work rules, may turn out to be acceptable to both parties.

Whatever the outcome, it is clear that both problems will arise again. Regarding the first, the logic of monopoly has always implied output restrictions; it has been merely a question of method. Steel has now found a new way, with steel workers and consumers the victims of the industry's intransigence. We know that the social costs of monopoly power are substantial; in the use of the strike as lockout they are intolerable. When will the Justice Department follow Congress's advice and take a close look at price leadership and administered prices in steel?

December

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At a recent meeting of the DISSENT *editorial board, we decided to print a section of articles, each of which would deal with new political and social problems—speculatively, tentatively, briefly. Five were proposed, four appear. The fifth, on "The Terms of Coexistence," fell victim to human frailty, though it is likely to remain a subject for future comment. Need it be added that these articles, like all the articles we print, represent the views of their authors and that other editors may disagree with them?*—ED.

CAN THE U.S. RECONVERT TO PEACE?

Ben B. Seligman

Bedazzled by the way in which the American economy successfully handled three post-war recessions, many observers have concluded that prosperity is now normal and routine, built-in to the system. Not only has the economy become less susceptible, they say, to the kind of cataclysmic collapse experienced in the 1930s, but it may well be that the business cycle itself has at long last been done away with, at least in our own generation. They point to the supposed fact that the downward cumulative force of a recession was halted time and again by a battery of built-in stabilizers which sustained demand in different parts of the economy. Steep progressive income taxes, unemployment insurance, high level capital expenditures and national pattern wage bargaining have all seemingly contrived to keep things going at a bubbling pace.

All this suggests to the new optimists that the affluent economy of the 1950s was totally different in quality from the economy of the 1930s and 1940s, and that the 1960s will continue the happy trends established after Korea. Productive capacity, the ability of the economy to maintain a flow of goods and services, is now almost double the 1929 level and the government presumably is better aware of the need to step in whenever economic events threaten to take a turn for the worse.

With Korea there came an upsurge in private spending, initiating a hectic but good-natured scramble for goods by both business and consumers. There was also a gradual and steady spending program for war needs which threatened to set off another inflationary push. By 1951, despite the war mobilization, prices leveled off, due perhaps as much to full consumer cupboards as to overstocking in inventories.

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When in 1953 the economy began to sag just a bit, it was thought that house building and consumer durables would collapse entirely. However, investment by business continued unabated and with the government lending its support through the guarantee of mortgages, home buying rose swiftly. Added to this was an unprecedented expansion in capital investment by business, again stimulated by Washington's tax privilege program, which provided for rapid depreciation and encouraged businessmen to spend as much as they could.

This was the picture as seen by most economists. Yet in virtually all the analyses I have examined little credit is given to the enormous expenditures by the Federal government on defense and other cold war needs. Ever since Korea, so-called national defense expenditures have approximated 10 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) and *today they stand virtually equal with business investment as a major factor in keeping the economy on a high level of affluence.* Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the impact of national defense on the economy would be to present the relevant statistical data for at least the years 1947 to 1958.

A CURSORY EXAMINATION reveals that while GNP rose in the 11-year period by almost 89 per cent and business spending by 26 per cent, Federal expenditures jumped some 235 per cent. The increase in national defense costs went up even more, reaching a level of 290 per cent as compared with 1947. These figures are on a current dollar basis; but even if we deflate them for constant dollars (to 1954) to eliminate the impact of price rises, the increases are still stupendous. With a correction for constant dollars, GNP increased 41 per cent, while Federal expenditures more than doubled, with the national defense portion jumping 166 per cent.

Yet during this period business investments, no matter how computed, that is on a constant dollar or current dollar basis, did not rise markedly in a relative sense. The ratio of business investment to GNP, in fact, has dropped during the eleven-year period. Even in constant dollars, there was a decline in 1958 of 4.5 per cent over 1947.

It may be said that the 1958 terminal date is unwarranted for, taking 1957 as the terminal year, constant dollar business investment showed a rise of 25 per cent within a decade. Nevertheless, the cutback in business expenditures of some $20 billion in 1958 did not appear to have appreciably affected the growth in GNP. The suspicion grows that business investment may have been displaced by government spending, especially for war purposes, as the prime mover in the American economy.

Of course, this has not always been the case. During the 19th century and prior to World War I, Federal spending was a minuscule portion of total output. But with each war, Washington's responsibility for an ever-increasing portion of the national product grew by leaps and bounds. During the 19th century, Federal outlays increased from some $10 million per annum to about $400 million by 1900. The

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War of 1812 and the Civil War pushed Federal spending up not merely for the duration of the conflict, but permanently, by 150 per cent and 230 per cent respectively. After World War I there was a jump of 260 per cent. But at no time prior to the present were military expenditures so significant a part of the total flow of goods and services. True, in World War I, spending for guns and military manpower was 16 per cent of national output, but it quickly dropped back to less than 1 per cent. The present 10 per cent figure, however, promises to become the normal level. Military responsibility for its portion of Gross National Product is now ten times what it was in the 1930s and more than 20 times what it was in the 19th century.

SOME ECONOMISTS HAVE ARGUED that so vast a program is really no drain on our total resources, since some of the materials and manpower utilized by the military might have remained unemployed anyway. Moreover, they say, the shift from low value sectors, such as farming, to high value products such as electronics and space photography, helps increase the GNP. Thus, our economy, they say, can only be prosperous when we prepare to blow it all to kingdom come. Perhaps the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt were not so crazy when they built pyramids, nor John Maynard Keynes so mad when he suggested that pound notes be buried in bottles to be dug out by the unemployed.

There is little doubt now that military spending has been extremely stimulating to the whole economic system. With the civilian economy growing at an annual rate of about 3 per cent per annum, an additional growth curve was added by government spending to meet the cold war needs. Assuming that the civilian economy was already prosperous by 1930 standards (a $300 billion GNP and 60 million employed) military hardware added that much more gravy. That is to say, war is good. It has not occurred to the experts that with other objectives and other values, the civilian economy might have digested the added GNP without any cramped feelings.

What would happen if military expenditures were curtailed? When the fighting stopped in Korea and military spending was reduced by some $10 billion in 1953–54 there was a sharp accompanying decline in economic activity. Not so much the size of the reduction but simply the fact that it took place at all was important. It is clear that a decrease in military spending in the kind of economy we now have would depress the level of GNP and, in human terms, create no little amount of unemployment. A successful disarmament program would be of great concern not only to those industries involved in research and development, electronics, aircraft and the like, but to all the peripheral industries which service them. If the economy functions with a multiplier of three, as seems likely, that is, if one dollar of investment leads ultimately to $3 of GNP, then a 50 per cent cut in military spending (or about $22 billion) would imply a fall in GNP of $66 billion. Such a reduction would be catastrophic. Since full employment now requires a growth of about $15 billion in GNP (in con-

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stant prices) the public projects necessary to replace military reductions would dwarf all imagination.

WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE to replace military spending with other items? This, of course, always depends on the domestic political climate. But with general government costs, veterans' services, agriculture, commerce and welfare items about as high as they can possibly go in the present juncture of affairs, it is doubtful that they could absorb what is now spent for cold war purposes. Frankly, where else could we spend $40 billion a year but in the military establishment?

There are some, like Seymour Harris and James Warburg, who feel certain that the economy can adjust to peacetime operations, given certain political conditions. But there is a reasonable doubt that the transition really can be made successfully. For, the basic question, as always, revolves about our willingness to look ahead and to plan for the numerous delicate adjustments that would be required to keep the economy moving at high levels. Not only would we have to make up the loss in GNP stemming from military cutbacks, but account would have to be taken of the $15 billion per annum increase in productivity.

A ten per cent reduction in military spending, or roughly about $4 billion a year, would require replacements considerably larger than that sum. Simply enough, the reduction of some $12 billion in GNP (the multiplier effect) would be virtually instantaneous, while the initiation of projects and spending programs to replace military expenditures would require time before the effect of their take-off would be felt. The backwash of a sharp and substantial reduction in the military sphere is more than apt to drown out the salutary impact of a new spending program. A large part of military outlays are direct: pay for soldiers and the Pentagon bureaucracy provides a flow of immediate purchasing power, whereas outlays for bridges, roads, and housing require time in order to exert their beneficial glow upon the economy. I submit that public non-war spending would have to be considerably larger than the military cutbacks themselves merely to overcome the gaps and time lags that would inevitably arise. Now, add to that the need to absorb the additional goods that can be produced by virtue of greater productivity and the enormity of the job becomes clearly evident.

To repeat, it is doubtful that non-military needs can absorb the full amount of expenditures saved through a disarmament program. Even a vast foreign aid effort, such as suggested by Warburg, could take not more than $5 to $10 billion a year. That would more than double the level of economic assistance now being given to other nations. Is Congress, and the present administration, likely to accept such a program? I doubt it.

True, there is a vast reservoir of social needs that we ought to fill. Both Seymour Harris and John Kenneth Galbraith have told us about the gaps in education, housing, flood control, highways, hospitals, medical services, social security, sanitation controls, urban and suburban

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transit, and recreation facilities—the list is indeed a long one. Schools are over-crowded and colleges do not know from where the funds for the next decade's operations will come; the lag in housing approximates 750,000 units a year and our old folks are relegated to the heap of the socially useless with pittances of $70 a month. Between the needs and the desire to meet them there yawns a chasm of political apathy, administrative stupidity, and business intransigence.

As Warburg said recently, how many corporate managers living off the fat of government contracts have given thought to what they might produce should peace really break out? How many plans have been developed for reconverting factories now devoted to defense needs? What thought has been given to providing jobs to those now in the armed services when they will have been released? What, in short, has been done to create quickly the markets necessary to replace $40 billion of defense spending?

The question reduces itself then, not to whether it *can* be done, whether a high speed economy is possible, but rather to whether it *will* be done, whether we have the foresight and wisdom to construct a social and political technique for a quick reversal of economic gears. Basically this is a matter of politics, not economics. It implies a radically new way of accomplishing tasks and a major realignment of political thinking. It means a new vision of society, one willing to undertake measures that will unstintingly provide people with the public services they have so long done without. It means, above all, a reorganization of the lines along which power is disposed; it means, if you will, a new political economy.

BRITISH LABOR IN 1960

Stanley Plastrik

There is a strong temptation to make the best of British Labor's defeat. After all, the popular vote shows a Tory margin of only 1½ million votes out of 30 million and a careful breakdown indicates that, within many electoral districts, a shift of a few hundred or, at worse, a few thousand votes would have elected a Labor MP rather than his opponent. Why then should socialists lose heart?

There is, I say, a strong desire among many of us to think along such lines. It is even more understandable if we reflect for a moment on what the British Labor Party has meant for democratic socialists since, let us say, its 1945 triumph. As disillusion with revolutionary Marxism (Leninism, Trotskyism) mounted in the 30s and 40s, the stock of British Labor rose correspondingly. Those—and I am no exception

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—who once sneered at Fabian doctrine, English empiricism and moderation in the name of the "vanguard" party were forced to reexamine their views. And who cannot remember the sense of elation we felt at the stunning defeat *our* party administered to Winston Churchill?

What is more, this party proceeded to carry out a good part of its election program: India, the welfare state, socialized medicine, economic planning. In its moment of defeat we tend to forget this, along with the paradox that England's present Conservative government owes everything it lays claim to (full employment, social services, the Commonwealth) to the accomplishments of the first Labor Government. In a sense, Labor created the circumstances for its own defeat.

Defeated forever, irrevocably? This cannot be answered, of course, but the road back to political power now seems a long and hard one. It would be folly to count upon some crass Tory stupidity; the Conservatives have also learned from the Suez fiasco and their new leadership has a keen understanding of Britain's true weight in the world. Besides, the facts argue against any quick Labor comeback: three defeats in a row, a declining portion of the popular vote from 48 per cent in 1945 to 43.8 per cent in 1959. And perhaps most important of all, there is the problem of generations: the fact that the militant "old timers" of Labor are aging and dying while their sons and daughters, even those who remain faithful to the party, see the world with other eyes and act by other standards. (The importance of the film *Room at the Top* lies not in the question, is there really room at the top?, but rather in its insight into the forces driving a son of the working class away from what his father had passed on as his heritage.) That the election would be lost became apparent early in the campaign when a working class woman past her prime was quoted as saying, in bitter tones, "They [the young people] have forgotten about the thirties."

And of course they have! For that matter, why shouldn't they? If the Labor Party's appeal to its own traditions accounted for much of its success, this rallying to the sacred name of Keir Hardie and the Red Flag cannot, in the modern world, suffice.

THE CAMPAIGN itself provided a series of paradoxes. As a general rule we may say that the clearer a party's view of its goals are, and the sharper its vision of the future, then the clearer will be that party's self-image in the present. But by this standard the British Labor Party was in a weak position. It could not start any political offensive since (a) its immediate campaign issues had been stolen from under its nose (peace offensive, summit, etc.) and (b) it is bewildered about ultimates. A general air of material prosperity meant an uphill fight and the BLP was set for anything but that type of campaign. The issues? In essence, fulfilling of material needs and desires; expansion of the economy. Foreign policy (Suez, Cyprus, Africa) met with indifference. The formal party position for renationalization of the steel industry, as well as road transport and large concerns under poor management, was quickly buried. As a result, the BLP campaign seemed to fall be-

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tween two extremes: one made up of a series of comparatively minor and secondary points such as pensions, social security, etc., and the other consisting of vague programmatic abstractions. In regard to the first, the Conservatives managed to sustain the popular image of Labor as the niggardly party devoted to restrictions, controls, priorities, and bureaucracy. In regard to immediate issues, Labor was outmaneuvered; much has been made of its TV "New Look," but that strikes me as both artificial and depressing. The employment of public relations advisors and British-style hucksters has very little to do with the search for a new political image.

Rhetoric formed the other extreme in the Labor appeal; and here follows a sample from *Socialist Commentary,* the journal of the party's parliamentary leadership:

> In this election, therefore, the choice before the voters is unusually clear-cut. Will we be content to jog along as we are already doing, all the while sinking into a comfortable second-rateness? Or do we want to infuse a new vitality into our society, a new direction and sense of purpose? It will be a sad day if the electorate plumps for the former.

Well, the electorate did "plump" for the former. Not that this passage from our friends of *Socialist Commentary* contains anything but the truth; it is just that it seems so representative of the self-defeating vagueness and the generally defensive stance which the Labor Party assumed throughout the campaign.

Finally, the party was hurt by a running internal struggle over issues of the greatest seriousness. In an article published in the *New Statesman,* September 26, 1959, the sociologist Peter Townsend summarizes these issues from a left-wing Laborite point of view: piecemeal reform vs. attachment to social and moral principles; a charge that the party had entered a "truce" in regard to the continuing struggle for social equality; the freezing of labor legislation; the party's alleged neglect of the remaining poor of England; a proposal for new taxation for further redistribution of income vs. right-wing emphasis upon expanding production and built-in incentives. No doubt, the right-wing would phrase things very differently, but these are among the major differences and now, in the post-election stock-taking, they are becoming sharper than ever.

No sooner were the elections over than the autopsy began. Aneuran Bevan stated:

> The principal cause for Labor's check must be sought, in my opinion, in the attitude of the electors between twenty-one and thirty years of age; those who attained adulthood during the past ten years and whose material conditions of life have led to a relative contentment or, at the very least, fear of any political adventure. To them the Labor Party represented an invitation to attempt social and political experiments for which they felt no inclination.
>
> Most of them are heavily in debt. Either they are paying heavy mortgage fees for purchase of their homes, or they are paying off on time for household articles, modern accessories or even on cars. Two contradictory feelings dwell within them: satisfaction at seeing their material prospects improving and fear of being unable to meet their obligations.

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Stuart Hall, editor of *Universities & Left Review,* writes discerningly of the more "advanced" and sophisticated youth:

> A fast-talking, smooth-running, hustling generation with an ad-lib gift of the gab, quick sensitivities and responses, and an acquired taste for the Modern Jazz Quartet. They are the 'prosperity' boys—not in the sense that they have a fortune stashed away, but in that they are familiar with the in-and-out flow of money.

•

ELECTIONS COME AND GO, but this one has left in its wake the most acute problem the BLP has ever known—its whole future. If we are to be perfectly honest about the problem, does democratic socialism as such, in any organized party or form, have a future? In this sense, we are all involved in the discussion already underway in the British Labor movement.

Thomas Balogh, the socialist economist, writes in the *New Statesman* that the BLP has to do some thinking, not merely re-thinking. Agreed. But thinking must start with an attempt to grasp reality. I would suggest the following propositions as a starting point:

a) Those countries of Western Europe, including England, having the largest number of wage-earners and/or salaried people have never given more than 50 per cent of their vote to any democratic socialist party. This means that anywhere up to one-half of the wage-earners and salaried population regularly vote for the conservative party of their country.

b) We must now acknowledge that a conservative government, *provided* it holds office during a period of economic stability and growth, can assure a reasonable state of well-being and social peace to the population it governs. In fact, the privilege of ruling is precisely what it receives in exchange for these assurances! "Progressive Toryism" has learned this lesson.

c) The issue of nationalization or public ownership of industry no longer arouses intense political feeling. This is partly the fault of democratic socialism itself since, in those nations where it either controlled or influenced nationalization (England, France and Western Germany) after the last war, it failed to convince either the workers or the population at large that there was much reason to choose a bureaucratic state nationalization from above as against the "normal" bureaucracy of private industry. It failed that is, to give nationalization a distinctively "socialist content."

d) Finally and most important, at the present moment there is no will or drive for state power on the part of the working class anywhere. There is only a desire for peace (coexistence), well-being (progress), consumption (economic expansion) and pleasure (private life).

Now the left wing of the Labor Party vigorously rejects such propositions and, in response to the electoral defeat, has recently launched a campaign for the "reaffirmation of socialism." Because of its continued influence in the constituency parties, it has largely molded this "reaffirmation" into stress upon the desirability for nationalization of industry. In my opinion, nothing could be more misleading or likely

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to end in an exchange of banalities. By so posing the issue—by the *Tribune,* left wing organ, speaking of the need for "militant socialist spirit"; by Frank Cousins, a leader of the British Trade Union Congress endorsing a series of radical "dont's" (don't deal with the Liberals, don't drop nationalization, don't attack trade union militancy)—the left wing not only encourages the growing split between the parliamentary party and the local constituencies, it also ensures that the debate will be conducted in the terms of *yesterday instead of today.*

Equally dubious is the tendency of the extreme right of the party toward some sort of fusion with the revived Liberal Party. It is one thing to consider tactical alliances with the Liberals involving elections and immediate issues; another to envisage a merger with the Liberal Party in which the image of socialism would, to all effects and purposes, be dead. There are a number of influential and intelligent leaders in the Labor Party who see the party's future as a sort of civil rights organization, held together by a vague adhesion to a set of spiritual values. This would so fly in the face of the Labor Party's tradition and practice as to mean an entirely different kind of movement. The views of C.A.R. Crossland seem to go in this direction. But it is an outlook which supposes the virtual disappearance of urgent social and economic problems demanding concrete proposals from the Labor Party (education, housing, poverty), and perhaps more important, it means the abandonment of the vision of a socialist society *qualitatively distinct from the present society,* even though the steps taken toward it may be gradual and uncertain.

If nationalization of the key industries, or to put it in other language, public ownership and management, is not the sacred goal which the Labor Party left-wing claims it to be, one cannot blandly dismiss it and still—at least without the most serious reflection—call oneself a socialist. Nationalization of industry is a possible means toward several ends: toward effective social planning, toward the diminution of the power of private capital, toward the spread of democracy into economic life. To cry for more nationalization in the name of "socialist fundamentals," as does the left wing, is to obscure the issues. But to drop it simply because for the moment it has little popular appeal and because a good number of the right-wing intellectuals in the Labor Party don't have a particularly intense socialist outlook, is politically irresponsible.

The question of nationalization should be posed in terms of its usefulness for achieving precisely those ends that Gaitskill and Crossland propose. May it not be necessary that for their new, pragmatic kind of socialism, for achieving the ends they specify—equality, social planning, the end of exploitative class feeling—nationalization will still remain necessary, at least with regard to certain basic industries? And may not nationalization, in the sense democratic socialists have understood it—that is, not as the vehicle of new bureaucratic controls but in the context of some form of workers participation in industrial life

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—touch closely upon such "abstractions" as the liberty and democracy about which Crossland correctly speaks? The need for profound structural changes and reforms in British society has not vanished; plans for bringing about many of these changes exist; others will be made in the future. It would be folly to suppose that such changes are possible if nationalization is abandoned in advance, just as it would be folly to suppose that nationalization *per se* can insure them.

The Labor Party is turning inward and we may expect that there will now be a period of both sharp factional struggle and, more important, of serious intellectual debate. The present left-right lineup, frozen as it tends to be around old formulas, is not very promising. What is needed is careful examination of the whole question which faces the Labor Party: how can a new and revitalized image of a socialist future be devised, so as to make sense to the loyal followers of the party and to appeal to the electorate? For this, neither a fundamentalist reaffirmation of public ownership nor an opportunist dismissal of it, will suffice. Powerful though it is, the Labor Party finds itself now confronted by the very problems that have been troubling us in DISSENT these past five or six years. In this sense, I would say that, as socialists, we should feel closer and more sympathetic than ever to our friends, indeed our party, in England.

THOUGHTS ON "PROSPEROUS" COMMUNISM

Lewis Coser

Khrushchev is reported to have remarked that *Dr. Zhivago* might have been published in the Soviet Union if only a few hundred words had been eliminated. The fact is, of course, that it was not published; but it might be worthwhile to speculate whether there is something inherent in the structure of Soviet society which must necessarily rule out the possibility.

Those of us who have maintained a sustained critical stance toward the Soviet Union may sometimes have succumbed to a certain rigidity which has hampered our judgment. Having found abundant evidence for the totalitarian nature of Russian society, we have perhaps sometimes been forced into a kind of Manichean world view according to which Russia represented absolute and immutable evil. To the extent that we indulged in such moods we may sometimes have been led to overlook possibilities of change in Russia which, though they would not alter its essential character, yet would affect significantly the quality of life. The tentative ideas which follow are to be read as an effort to counter tendencies toward the ossification of thought among radical and socialist anti-Communist thinkers.

It has been considered axiomatic that totalitarian regimes must

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necessarily extend their control over all spheres of social life, that none of these can be left uncoordinated since each uncontrolled sphere must be considered a source of infection from the point of view of the power-holders. Total loyalty being the pre-condition of total domination, so the argument runs, a totalitarian regime cannot permit effective freedom in any sphere.

While this theory has been most fruitful for an understanding of Soviet society until quite recently, it has not been able to account for a number of new developments both in the satellite countries and in the motherland of the Soviet empire. The thaw of recent years plainly was more than a public relations device; a certain amount of undogmatic and relatively open discussion has been permitted to scientists, literary men, university personnel; and private lives have been freed from many of Stalin's terroristic controls. I am aware that a new freeze set in when the thaw threatened to flood the well-guarded river banks of required conformity. Yet even a brief glance at the intellectual and social conditions of the Russia of 1959 must convince the unbiased observer that these are considerably removed from the terroristic modes of Stalin's regime. It seems, indeed, as if recent Russian development follows a rhythmic pattern of restriction and release, of expansion and contraction, while yet, at the same time, exhibiting a secular trend toward relaxation. How can this be explained?

THE MAIN FACT to be considered here is that Russian society has reached a stage of growth which has brought it over the "hump" in the process of industrialization. Modern economists such as Balogh, Strachey and Rostow have argued that there is a hump in the process of industrialization, a hump which is most painful to surmount. Till societies are over the hump, the process of primitive capital accumulation is exceedingly demanding since it can only take place at the direct expense of the standard of living of the mass of the underlying

"Politics is Daft"

"... surely the most thought-provoking [words on the British elections] were those of *The Times* correspondent from Leeds on October 8th. After three weeks in industrial Yorkshire, he reported that, outside political committee rooms and meetings, he had never once heard politics spontaneously mentioned, nor taken part in any political conversations except those initiated by himself. He then reported some of the characteristic responses he had met with. . . . A chambermaid thought all poltics were 'daft' and what we needed was a coalition, as during the war. This was also the almost unanimous opinion in a pub. More striking was the opinion of a textile worker who said he could never forgive Mr. Gaitskell for 'stabbing us in the back over the Suez,' but that he was going to vote Labour because the Tories are the party of big business, and they 'don't want the ordinary man to have a car.' "—from a letter to the Editor of the *Twentieth Century*.

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population. Once the initial hump of industrialization has been surmounted, however, high levels of accumulation become less imperative and at the same time easier to achieve. Production of consumer goods can then be stepped up. (Cf. John Strachey "Capital Accumulation and Socialist Politics," DISSENT, Fall 1956.)

One need hardly be a Marxist to expect that if a pre-hump economy differs significantly from a post-hump economy then the quality of social and intellectual life must also be affected. There is no reason to assume that the Russian economy will in the foreseeable future usher in an age of abundance but there is reason to believe that, as compared to pre-hump conditions, the Russian consumer is now faced with a considerably brighter future. And once the constraining and cribbing effect of dire want and nagging hunger is removed one can expect that this will have very significant effects on the social and intellectual life of the country. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, it is most probable that the Russian decision-makers are quite aware of this fact.

There are a great number of signs which lead one to conclude that Khrushchev is consciously engaged in an effort to atune the social and intellectual conditions of Russia to the new economic circumstances. Only naive believers in the Iron Law of History, such as Isaac Deutscher, imagine that the ruling bureaucracy of the Soviet Union will now engage in preparing collective suicide because they are "no longer historically progressive." On the contrary, our thinking here ought to start from the premise that while a ruling group never commits suicide there have been a number of ruling groups which have been shrewd and elastic enough to adjust their reign to the requirements of new conditions.

Let us then assume for the purpose of argument that the standard of living in the Soviet Union will continue to rise substantially in the next period, and that certain modes of restraint which were necessitated by the process of primitive accumulation will have become obsolescent. What then are the limits of relaxation? Here I consider it axiomatic that the ruling bureaucracy will not voluntarily relinquish its monopoly on political power and on the legitimate use of the means of violence. I cannot believe that within the foreseeable future there will come any significant move to relax the hold which the total party has over the political life of the country. There can be no relaxation with regard to autonomous political action. But there might be a possibility, a chance, that though the political reins will be held as tightly as in the past, considerably more relaxed policies may be applied to intellectual and social life.

There exist today a number of countries, especially in Latin America, where a small authoritarian elite tightly controls the political structure and where the citizens still have a considerable degree of intellectual and personal freedom. In such countries the citizen is free to criticize the government; the writer, the student, the professor is free to reject the assumptions of official policy provided, and this seems to me the crux of the matter, provided I say, that these intellectuals

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do not appeal to the underlying population; provided, in other words, that there is mass apathy about things political. Under such conditions the intellectual is likely to play the role of the court fool; he may say outrageous things, he may needle and annoy and criticize the men of power and yet he will be innocuous since his ideas will have no consequences.

Social systems provide for specific institutions which serve to deflect hostile and aggressive sentiments away from vital targets. These safety valve institutions help to maintain the system by preventing otherwise probable conflict or by reducing its disruptive effect. It is conceivable that a certain amount of intellectual and personal freedom in Russia might serve just such safety valve functions. Yet it can serve them only if the chance of wider strata in the population picking up this criticism and turning it to their own uses is effectively minimized. In other words, apathy of the population is a *sine qua non* for the employment of such a political formula. Only if relaxation is unlikely to lead to the mobilization of political energies can it be successfully applied.

SOVIET SOCIETY is an atomized society, that is, a society in which the traidtional social groupings which bind citizens in associations and communities or self-conscious classes have been destroyed and replaced by the imperative coordination of public activities through organs of Party and State. During the Stalinist pre-hump period the main aim of the policy-maker was to constantly mobilize the energies of the masses of de-grouped individuals in the service of statified industrialization. But in post-hump Soviet society this becomes more difficult and less necessary. Individuals want finally to cash in on the results of industrialization, they clamor for consumer goods and a more relaxed style of life. The regime is half-heartedly willing to give in, but is also aware that relaxation means that energies which were heretofore harnessed to the service of political and economic tasks would now be set free.

Only if the power-holders succeed in diverting this freed energy into channels of private enjoyment, only if they engage in a conscious policy of "Americanization," can they hope to achieve a condition in which the bulk of the population, freed from the onerous burdens of pre-hump conditions, quietly engage in the pursuit of private pleasures, passive, indifferent, atomized and malleable. Tocqueville envisaged this most clearly when he adumbrated the modern mass society:

"The sentiment of ambition is universal, but the scope of ambition is seldom vast. Each individual stands apart in solitary weakness; but society at large is active, provident, and powerful: the performances of private persons are insignificant, those of the State immense." The individual has been thrown upon his private sphere, "hence such men can never, without an effort, tear themselves from their private affairs to engage in public business; their natural bias leads them to abandon

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the latter to the sole visible and permanent representative of the community, that is to say the State."

If Soviet man were to acquire the characteristics of Tocqueville's mass man, then it stands to reason that the political formula I have alluded to stands a considerable chance of successful implementation. In Latin America the apathy and passivity of the population is conditioned by illiteracy and primitivism; in an industrialized post-hump society mass culture may be the functional equivalent of illiteracy. We may witness in the future Russian society a considerable relaxation of controls over writers, scientists, university intellectuals. If the Soviet Union grants these men freedom to think and create; if we should note an end to the detailed regulation of personal opinions and private lives, then this should not lead us to believe that the Soviet Union has become a free and humane society. It is conceivable that *Dr. Zhivago* will be published in Russia, but not conceivable that Djilas' *New Class* appear there. In other words, freedom could be granted only to those modes of expression which do not directly challenge the basis of Soviet rule. "Theory becomes a physical force as it takes possession of the masses" (Marx)—and as long as it does not, it may be tolerated because it must finally remain innocuous.

Any freedoms that the Russian intellectual elite may achieve in the foreseeable future would be bought at the price of the continued passivity, dehumanization and degradation of the underlying population. Russia would still be a bad society.

P.S. Do I believe this speculation? I half believe it, I fear it, I just don't know. What do you think?

LIBERALISM AND LASSITUDE

Emanuel Geltman

We are soon going to be asked: whom will you vote for in November? Given the quadrennial pressure to face utter disaster with reaction or coddle the future with facsimile liberalism, I would like to record my opinion early: the question does not impress me as a vital one, and I shall probably sit my answer out.

Why? A serious socialist organization will not enact a feeble charade of political activity. The ritualistic socialist sects will make a busy ceremony of "equal time," which is their privilege. For my part, I feel no obligation to worship because someone has erected a temple.

For the few who still look wistfully at the labor leaders, or the ranks behind them, it might be added that we have become quite accustomed to threats of a new kind of political intervention—even by

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such potent figures as Meany and Reuther. We have become accustomed, period.

I am not saying that anything short of simon-pure socialism (my kind, of course) is unacceptable. Many of us are quite ready to accept good liberal coin in the absence of socialist exchange. There have been and will again be situations where a single issue overrides considerations of party frame or program. Negro rights, labor's status, any given issue could become the cleaving principle of a campaign and require a stand regardless of other considerations. A political shuffle might so jar present trends. Conceivably, but not perceivably.

There is, then, no promise of socialist or of labor political action. And there is very little promise of liberal political action—on the level where it can challenge complacency, conservatism or inertia. There is disquiet aplenty in the country. But it is the disquiet of anxiety, not indignation. There are more real issues than we can possibly enumerate; and people are disturbed or worried about them. But they do not intrude into consciousness to the point where there is articulate pressure or desire for action. One might say that they contribute to a neurotic atmosphere, not a political one. (I speak of the country as a whole, not of such glorious instances as Negro courage in Montgomery or Little Rock.)

RECENTLY, one of the more energetic minds of American liberalism, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrote a piece for *The Progressive* (September 1959) which attempts to rally a liberal movement behind a progressive platform of social reform. What Mr. Schlesinger does—and there is nothing wrong with this as an agitational strategy—is to say: here are issues, only a liberal reform movement can deal with them, an upsurge of political liberalism is therefore necessary and certain. Presumably, it is a hopeful piece—it outlines a programmatic basis for American liberalism, and it predicts an optimistic future of political activity. It capably explores the mood behind the Eisenhower victories; it confounds such historical misconceptions as the dependence of a reform movement on a period of depression; it foresees new alignments in the Democratic and Republican parties creating an Age of Reform in the Sixties.

The Sixties, of course, will last all of ten years. Anything might happen in that time. But if Mr. Schlesinger is aiming at Sixty itself, then his apparently optimistic presentation of problems and opportunities, reduces itself to a pessimistic view. For it depends in conclusion on *"the selection of Democratic candidates with the intelligence and imagination to anticipate the needs of the new period"* (emphasis in the original). This is a pretty tawdry star to pin on the breast of high expectation.*

* Mr. Schlesinger supports his argument with an historical theory of cyclical change which is, to say the least, unconvincing. I wouldn't think of matching historical scholarship with Mr. Schlesinger, or with his father, the noted historian who developed the theory, but his cycles of American passivity and reform strike me as contrived. Starting at another point of the calendar and selecting other intervals,

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There is no question but that Mr. Schlesinger understands the malaise of our time when he speaks of our "self-estranged social order." We do have troubles enough, and in some cases enough of a solution to elevate the trouble to a problem. Mr. Schlesinger does a commendable job on both. It is his view that we can only make progress by expanding the public sector of the economy, by "making the public interest the central issue" not through disciplinary controls (restrictive legislation) but constructively by *"the allocation of resources between the private and public sector of the economy"* (emphasis in original).

Once it is seen in the context of Mr. Schlesinger's political conclusions for 1960, this liberal program seems to me quite as visionary as any that might be dreamed up by a socialist. If he passes rather lightly over poverty in the United States, Mr. Schlesinger does appreciate our moral and practical responsibility for poverty in other areas of the world. But what motivation, what vital driving force, can our "estranged social order" supply for this purpose? Mr. Schlesinger faces the problem of maintaining full production independent of a war economy—by eliminating the problem. He unites the necessities of building "social health and military strength." By its very nature that implies producing negatively, for destructive, wasteful purposes. And if the fear of war isn't one of our great underlying anxieties, then what is? To speak then, as he does next, about taxation and inflation controls, is a letdown; especially as he also calls them mere "technical problems." Are they, though? Does not a tax program, an inflation program, if intended to redress social imbalance, prick a sensitive area of the capitalist skin—as do foreign aid and similar measures of social need? Mr. Schlesinger would, I am sure, agree that if the New Deal served useful social ends in the depression Thirties, the nuclear-powered Sixties require something more.

AMONG THESE PROPOSALS, Mr. Schlesinger incorporates some twelve programmatic planks which, if they are not the product alone of liberal (or socialist) genius, contain some essentials in human decency: slum clearance and revitalized community life; a reconstructed educational system; equal rights for minorities; freedom of speech; etc. Since Mr. Schlesinger observes that they need to be endowed "with a broader meaning," I will not comment on how curiously undeveloped they are for this type of article. I must, however, comment, on their lack of interrelation. For along with a proposal to "elevate our popular culture" is another to prosecute "our weapons effort."

Now this raises an interesting question: does a good Sixties-type of reformer have to accept this as a package? Can one be a good progressive and not prosecute the weapons effort, but seek instead some way of disposing of it so that we can, precisely, address ourself to the problem of mass culture? It suggests another question which relates

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could one not create another kind of cycle? In any case, I rather suspect that the Sixties will have to make it on their own, without benefit of a cyclical assist.

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very much to the entire framework of his rallying-call: can you by now so easily separate the sheep from the goats, the conservatives from the reformers?

Is Acheson more "progressive" in world affairs than Eisenhower—or Rockefeller? Is Rockefeller more "progressive" than Nixon? Does that mean that he is more ready to attack the fundamental inequities behind our social imbalance? Is Nixon more opportunistic in his advocacy of Negro rights than Kennedy in speaking for the Algerians? Cannot a died-in-the-wool capitalist scoundrel stand as unequivocally for minority rights as you or I? In a word, the easy traditional distinction between conservative and liberal is fading away, and Mr. Schlesinger's program, good as it may be in its own right, does not succeed in giving new meaning to that distinction.

The intelligence and imagination of the Democratic and Republican candidates, reflecting the leadership of both parties, can be measured today. In Sixty we will have Nixon or Rockefeller runnning against Symington, Kennedy, Johnson, or Humphrey. Throw Stevenson in too as a possibility. Is there *really* anything in this prospect to capture the imagination? That any of these men will so force a commitment to new perspectives as to provoke the creation of a new political institution embracing "radical" Democrats and "liberal" Republicans is beyond present imagination. By new perspectives (borrowing from Schlesinger) I mean: to motivate the national will to correct social imbalance, advance international economic health, reduce the ravages of political fear and increase individual freedom. Will Humphrey, the most "programmatic" of the lot, forsake the taste of the Presidency to risk everything for principle? And if he did, who would cut loose from the Republican or Democratic parties to join him—who of the politicians, who of the labor leaders? Not one of these gentlemen (except Symington) has, for example, had the decency or courage to tell the Catholic Church to devote itself to its parishioners and to keep out of such a social, public and individual affair as birth control.

We can as seriously deceive ourselves by assuming that these men offer us a working standard of leadership as by assuming they are all without intelligence. One of the saddest speculations I recently read was in the column of a Washington correspondent, William Shannon, who dreamed a glorious dream—a great political discourse between Stevenson and Rockefeller in the image of such great debates of the past as the Lincoln-Douglas debates. We have indeed come a long way down the scale of taste. What great issues divide them—Stevenson and Rockefeller? What *ideas* have they given promise of offering? A great political debate does not hang only on skill (and on that ground alone Lincoln has a right to protest), but on ideas—and on *division*, opposing ideas.

I AM NOT AT ALL suggesting that politics is unimportant. I am suggesting that the avenues of political action today tend to become more and more trivial. Perhaps the traditional vehicles of po-

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litical action (regardless of denomination) no longer suit the needs of our time. I don't know. If discourse is all we have left, and that too can be practically effective, let it be so without the distraction of such soul-depressing issues as whether Kennedy or Symington is the superior candidate.

It might be good to see the labor leaders independently engaged in political activity. Since it is unlikely, and a hazard if it were likely, it might be better if they addressed themselves to the problems that cannot be solved by the best kind of party program—or government! The steel strike is a case in point. Legislation (the Taft-Hartley act) ultimately sent the men back to work at an inopportune moment for the union. Apart from the fact that a Fair Dealish Democratic administration might have sent the men back to work earlier, legislation did not create the difficulty, nor could better legislation have solved it. The strike was called, in effect, not by the union, but by the companies to force a test of class strength on a relatively small but handy issue. McDonald wanted no test of class strength and he obviously wanted no strike. For all I know he might have welcomed Taft-Hartley intervention to *head off* the strike.

Agreed he is a sorry specimen, but outside of Hoffa and the teamsters, how many unions are willing to face a major strike today? Is Reuther willing to tackle the auto companies? Militancy is not at all the criterion. How *do* you advance labor's economic interests (correct the social imbalance) when the economy, apart from the immensely wealthy companies involved, is so rich it can sustain a long interruption of production? That the steel workers stood fast is a tribute to their courage. But would you—good socialist, labor militant, or whatever—have asked this sacrifice at this time knowing it would last 100-odd days, and might have to be resumed for a hundred more? I am not sure of my answer! What forms of economic action are available to labor in the vastly productive, increasingly automated United States? A question such as this one may be far more important—for liberals, reformers and socialists—in Sixty than the available forms of political participation. A question such as this may indicate how and why the most serious of our socio-political issues seem more and more to lie outside the frame of our electoral structure and our normal political disputes.

Political harassment by an unfriendly government can hurt; political assistance by a friendly government can help. But unless the one descends to complete reaction, and the other ascends to complete social responsibility, the effects are peripheral. Consider a few of our central problems. Laws and parties are not preventing the organization of the white collar worker. Internal union democracy is not seriously abetted by good will inside or outside labor. How shall we meet automation with shorter hours, if we cannot discourage overtime, second jobs? Or how reconcile labor's self-interest with the necessity of foreign nations to export?

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THESE ARE THE NEW and increasingly difficult problems that we face—and to them could be added scores of others, ranging from urban planning to mass culture, from education to the nature of work. They are real problems, not mere shapeless troubles. *Yet they do not lend themselves to solution by traditional political means*—though, obviously, they can be affected, their solution helped or hindered, by traditional political action. But if we look at so crucial a matter as segregation, it becomes clear that whatever progress has been made has been the result of selfless activity by *angry,* not anxious people working outside the traditional political structure, and also of an intervention by government in which it is hard to discern much clear distinction between conservatives and liberals.

It is this which leads me to suspect that Mr. Schlesinger, despite the cogency of his analysis and the relevance of his issues, may be whistling in the dark. The issues he specifies are there, but the will, the readiness to take risks, the necessary radicalism—radicalism not in the dogmatic but the literal sense—is not. So it may also be that the apathy Mr. Schlesinger and others have noted as characteristic of the Fifties reflects an awareness of sorts that it does not much matter which party wins, by present evidence. For of what use to speak of issues and ideas if the outcome is reduced to the convention antics in August? New modes of political expression are required—perhaps by autonomous groups in local areas, perhaps by a complete overhauling of our conceptions of political activity. It would be a very bold man who would pretend that he has a pat answer here. But in the meantime, the "desperate choice" in November strikes me as neither so very desperate nor as anything but beside the point. *November 1959*

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A MIND'S TURNINGS

Irving Howe

There are grey moments when I charge myself with some small responsibility for the endless chatter about "conformity" that has swept the country. Six years ago, when McCarthyism was at its worst and the response of many intellectuals somewhat less than heroic, I wrote a sharp polemic for *Partisan Review* called "This Age of Conformity." Much of what appeared there still seems to me true, but I could not then know that, unintentionally, I was helping to make the outcry against conformity into a catch-word of our conformist culture.

Despite a small circulation, *Partisan Review* is an influential magazine. Editors and "opinion-makers" read it to keep up with the latest thoughts and moods of the intellectuals; it serves, also, as one of the sources for which middlebrow culture appropriates serious ideas. No one is surprised these days to find a notion or phrase migrating directly from the quarterlies to a cigarette ad, since the man writing the ad may well be an intellectual *manqué* who sneers at *Partisan Review* yet dreams of having it accept his story about the spiritual ordeals of Madison Avenue. As with cigarette ads, so with denunciations of conformity. And to be fair about it: as with *Partisan Review,* so, more or less, with DISSENT.

Intellectuals used to complain that society ignored or rejected their ideas; they could hardly have imagined what might happen when, for ends of its own, society learned to "adapt" those ideas. During the past few decades the most remarkable trait of American culture has been neither conformity nor conservatism, not even its truly astonishing dullness; it has been an unprecedented capacity for assimilating—and thereby depreciating—everything on its own terms, both lavish praise and severe attacks.*

Assaults upon mass culture become an indispensable element of culture: the spice for the stew. *One idea seems as good as another, since none seems to matter very much*—this amiably nihilistic version of *chacun à son goût* is the most authentic sentiment of the age. And there seems no way of escaping it.

Perhaps so. But that does not mean that one should seek it and

* "To make enemies is perfectly easy; the difficult thing is to keep them."—William Dean Howells

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rush to embrace it. Adulteration may await whatever you say, yet that does not relieve you of the obligation to speak.

It is true that one mode of resistance, almost never considered by radicals, is silence. No one has yet found a way of popularizing silence, and for many people it must have a genuine value, which we should not scorn. But for the intellectual it will not do. The intellectual, alas, is a *noise-maker*: he is the man who keeps talking even after the room has been emptied and the shades drawn.

Another possibility for resistance is the scholar's kind of specialization. The main media are quick to grasp phrases about "conformity," and recently have begun to make raids upon literary criticism and discussions of "action painting"; but they leave genuine scholarship untouched, except in those rare circumstances when it promises to yield a tremor of novelty. Still, no matter how much the intellectual may admire and envy the scholarly specialist, he cannot emulate him. In the nature of things, the intellectual deals with the kinds of topics that the mass media will want to aggrandize. By impulse, if not definition, the intellectual is a man who writes about subjects outside his field. He has no field.

Will a magnified reiteration of radicalism protect him from the raids of mass culture? Probably not. At some moments, it may even help make him more popular, since it can lend him a certain individuality, a flavoring, that sets him apart from the bleached liberalism of the American scene.

Recognizing all this, the intellectual can only maintain his moral guard, nourish his sense of humor, try to avoid needless self-pity, self-righteousness and snobbism—and keep doing his work. We can be responsible only for what we say, not for what "happens" to it later—though, aware of likely "happenings," we ought to try hard to throw up safeguards against subsequent corruption.

And something else that pertains to us of DISSENT. In some limited circles, now that Cold War chauvinism is dying out, radicalism seems again to be taking on a sickly sort of popularity. No one, to be sure, wants it for himself, but everyone is ready to admit that it might be good to have a "constructive radical voice" in America. Some people even suggest they know what such a voice should say, though they tend to be chary of providing examples.

But if you so much as mention socialism, then you are likely to be considered dangerous (by the readers of *Life,* whose minds seldom change) or absurdly old-fashioned (by the readers of *Partisan Review,* whose minds have been nourished on a diet of novelties). And that may be a good reason—surely not the only or main reason—why those of us whose Marxism is vestigial and whose socialism is primarily a commitment to a value and a problem, should continue to regard ourselves not merely as radicals but also as socialists. If nothing else, it helps suggest that we do not wish to be accepted as members of the Establishment, not even as members who by their frolicsome nay-saying make it easier for the rest to stay comfortable and cool.

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II

If Jesus were to deliver His sermon on the mount next week, Ed Murrow would interview Him in His gracious suburban home, Khrushchev would announce that in Russia they have "things just as good," *Time* would sorrowfully warn its readers against His gnostic heresies, Jean Paul Sartre would publish in a special number of *Temps Modernes* a 60,000 word preface to the French edition, and Dwight Macdonald—Dwight Macdonald would write that while "Mr. Christ makes some telling points" they suffer from syntactical confusion and "a woolly pretentious style."

III

An intellectual, Harold Rosenberg once said to me in an amusing improvisation, is someone who turns answers into questions. This vivid sentence suggests all the invited discomfort, the principled worrying at one's own assumptions, that ought to be characteristic of intellectual life. But there is something else, so utterly commonplace that by now it needs to be cried from rooftops: an intellectual is a man who, by the very fact of his existence, is pledged to freedom.

To many other things as well: but to freedom above all, to freedom as it manifests itself in a series of definite and particular rights, and, equally important, as it is a commanding and moving idea.*

That I am here talking about intellectuals in a special way—by normative fiat more than historical observation—is clear. Yet there is also some historical ground for doing this, if only because over the past two centuries a whole series of norms and ideals have accumulated around the term "intellectual." The ideal construct, so obviously unrealized in many situations, which I here give to the term "intellectual" has itself become part of our history.

Intellectuals have often enough allowed themselves to become mere sycophants of ruling power, even a ruling power that was repressive and inhumane. At other times they have performed, reasonably and constructively, a variety of technical or political tasks. In such instances the judgment of their relationship to the dominant power cannot be made on *a priori* grounds, but depends on a series of specific historical estimates. At the same time, I cannot help thinking that there is always a side to the intellectual—the side that makes him preeminently and uniquely an intellectual—which stands apart, as critic and observer, as the man who in the name of freedom casts a cold eye upon considerations of expediency. (In the modern totalitarian state, or in relation to it, intellectuals who become involved with History, Progress and Plans cease, in the special sense that I have here used the term,

* When the Polish intellectuals in 1956 started their opposition to Stalinism, they demanded a series of definite and particular rights, which were valuable not only to them but to other sections of the population; but in a remarkably short time they began to see that their struggle derived from, and could not be sustained without, a general idea or value of freedom. They began by struggling for the right to existence, but inevitably this led them to a struggle for the right kind of existence.

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to be intellectuals. They take on other roles: scribe, publicity man, political adjutant.)

For an intellectual to defend freedom is no particular cause for self-congratulation: it ought to be as instinctive with him as for a child to reach for food. That is why the flabbiness of spirit which characterized a good many American intellectuals during the McCarthy period, particularly those who were associated with the ill-named Committee for Cultural Freedom and who dominated the editorial staffs of *Commentary* and the *New Leader,* is a deep and lasting blotch. And that is why it is so disquieting to hear intellectuals who but yesterday were professional anti-Stalinists now expressing the kind of rationalizations for Communist power that one has become accustomed to hearing from Paul Sweezy and Isaac Deutscher.

To keep saying such things is not artificially to preserve a grudge; it is to assume that even in a country like ours, where memory is notoriously short, experience does matter.

IV

Unexpectedly my mind keeps turning to Dostoevsky—not, as in the past, the novelist of extreme psychic states but the thinker whom radicals used uneasily to belittle. I mean the Dostoevsky who foresaw a situation in which the movement of history would drive men into a fearful choice between the risks of freedom and the security of a false collective. In the past, to be sure, this has seemed an excessively abstract and apocalyptic view, since the actual choices were seldom as total as Dostoevsky assumed. But now, for the first time, it becomes possible to foresee, in the future just beyond the immediate horizon, a Dostoevskian choice.

The Grand Inquisitor, anticipating his reign on earth, tells Christ:

> We shall give them the quiet humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature. Oh, we shall persuade them at least not to be proud, for Thou didst lift them up and thereby taught them to be proud. We shall show that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all . . . They will marvel at us and will be awe-stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever . . . Yes, we shall set them to work, but in their leisure hours we shall make their life like a child's game . . . Oh, we shall allow them even to sin, they are weak and helpless . . .
>
> And they will be glad to believe our answer, for it will save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a decision for themselves. And all will be happy, all the millions . . .

How much "translation" is required to see that this vision, though expressed in the terms of Dostoevsky's anarchist Christianity, anticipates the dominant trend of bureaucratic society, the Communist version primarily but surely not alone? A few elements are missing: the role of technology, the growth of functional rationality—Dostoevsky had not read Max Weber. But the anticipation is there.

When one is engaged in concrete political analysis which involves firm and immediate political choices, it seems to me both intellectually

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facile and morally catastrophic to affirm an identity between the societies of East and West. Though there is a tendency for the two to move closer to each other, the differences remain enormous, crucial, a matter of life-and-death. But if one turns from the immediate political struggle to a kind of socio-cultural speculation by means of which certain trends are projected into an indefinite future, there may be some reason for anticipating a society ruled by benevolent Grand Inquisitors, a society of non-terroristic and bureaucratic authoritarianism, on top of which will flourish an efficient political-technical elite—a society, in short, that makes Huxley's prophecy seem more accurate than Orwell's, except insofar, perhaps, as Orwell's passion and eloquence helped invalidate his own prophecy.

If, as now seems likely, there will not be a war within the next few decades, and if, but this seems less likely, ways are found for controlling the birth rate, it becomes possible to envisage a world in which material wants will be moderately satisfied. This possibility arises not, as radicals once thought, because there is an immediate likelihood that the human race will create for itself a free and humane order, but largely because of the sheer cascading growth of technology. The struggle between East and West has brought obvious catastrophic consequences for modern life; but one ironic consequence has been that the inner tendencies toward social crisis within both capitalist and Communist society are held in check by the need each has to combat the other. And more: the struggle between East and West accelerates the technological growth that makes it possible to foresee a life without severe material want.

To advance this speculation at a time when the majority of human beings on our planet still suffer from terrible poverty, may seem irrelevant and even heartless. And it is a speculation which rests upon grossly simplified ideas, partly on the kind of technological determinism which I have repeatedly attacked. But I offer it *not* as a prediction, only as a conceptual possibility that takes on increasing relevance. That this possibility will not be realized in the next several decades, for a variety of reasons having to do with our political and social arrangements, seems almost certain. But the possibility remains worth considering in its own right.

Suppose, then, that the goal of moderate material satisfaction is reached after the next several decades in large areas of the world and by societies that are not socialist and often not even democratic. What would the intellectuals say? We may assume that large numbers of ordinary people, fed regularly and diverted by the mass media, would be satisfied—as, by comparison with their previous condition, they might have good reason to be. But the intellectuals? Snug in their posts and aglow with honors, would they still remember or care about the vision of human freedom? Would they still feel the force of Dostoevsky's legend with its either-or of freedom and happiness? Or would they comfort themselves by regarding it as a mere dusty remnant of the nineteenth century?

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For in our time the Grand Inquisitor is no longer a withered Churchman: stern, ascetic, undeluded. He is now a skilled executive who knows how to manage large-scale enterprises and sustain the morale of his employees. In the West he is a corporation official, in the East he belongs to the Central Committee. He is friendly. And he feeds the hungry.

At the end of Dostoevsky's legend, Christ says not a word but meekly kisses the Grand Inquisitor. Berdyaev and other Christian commentators see this as a triumph of love over power, Christ's readiness to embrace even his greatest enemy, His wisdom in rising above mere argument. No doubt. But perhaps Dostoevsky also meant something else. Perhaps Christ's kiss, as D. H. Lawrence thought, is a sign of loving helplessness: He has nothing to say to the Grand Inquisitor, He cannot struggle with him for possession of the world. The kiss is a kiss of despair, and He retreats, forever, in silence.

V

Socialist intellectuals: so we like to call ourselves, but isn't there an inner conflict or at least tension in that term? The socialist foresees another order of society: a better one, more humane and creative. He stresses the values of community and fraternity. The intellectual is eager to acquiesce in this vision, but partly he does so as an opposition-in-advance, as one who, in reaction to the "cockney dream" and the threat of contentment, will continue *unreasonably* to insist upon freedom.

Saying this, I do not wish to set up a false dualism or to condescend toward non-intellectual socialists: not at all. But since I believe that, for most purposes, one's sense of the socialist possibility and one's sense of the intellectual life relate fruitfully to each other, I find it possible also to see the tension between noun and adjective in "socialist intellectual." Besides, the glory of the socialist movement at its best was that it did teach people to think, not merely in general terms rising above their immediate desires, but also of freedom as a value in itself, as the only condition in which man might find his humanity. At its best the socialist movement helped transform workers into thoughtful and reflective human beings, to raise them from objects into subjects—perhaps its finest achievement and one that only petty snobs would dismiss.

VI

No matter what their formal opinions, all intellectuals, insofar as they are intellectuals, tend finally toward a kind of non-political anarchism. That is why one often feels closer to writers like Dostoevsky, Conrad and Melville, whatever their stated views, than to many American liberals and European Social Democrats.

VII

What is our main difficulty, we Dissenters? Not that we lack a clear-cut ideology, nor that we lack power, nor that we refuse cer-

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tain of the latest intellectual fashions. Our main difficulty is that we are not related to a living movement about which we could steadily and with loyalty complain, and that no such movement is in sight. We have, so to speak, to summon up an hallucinatory *as if* in order to scratch away at what is.

But this may not speak well for us. It may be an unfortunate part of our tradition, a hang-over from Marxism, that because we have no expectation of immediate political action, we should find it so hard to engage in the necessary tasks of criticism and discussion.

VIII

An interesting dialogue seems to have arisen between ourselves and some of the new socialist intellectuals in England. In anthologies like *Conviction,* magazines like *Universities and Left Review,* the books of men like Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society*) and Richard Hoggart (*The Uses of Literacy*) one finds a new sense of socialist idealism, undogmatic and humane, though sometimes lacking in political precision.

Some of these Englishmen have been good enough to speak well of DISSENT, perhaps finding a use in the speculations that have appeared in our pages. In turn, we admire their efforts to give substance, through their close analysis of English life and culture, to the generalities of socialism. But perhaps still more, we envy their situation: the fact that they are in some relationship, even a critical one, with a living and significant political movement. This enables them to fulfill the job of the socialist intellectual without embarrassment or nail-biting: I mean the kind of nail-biting that one sometimes finds in DISSENT.

Is it the difference in our situations that causes a certain variance of approach between our British friends and ourselves? Raymond Williams, in a warm review of *Voices of Dissent,* felt obliged to say that he found in our book some "sick" voices. He was probably right. There may have been times when our efforts at criticism collapsed into complaints, and our complaints into gripes. What Williams apparently meant was that some DISSENT writers had pushed to a dubious and even self-comforting extreme their sense of alienation in a mass society.

In turn, however, when reviewing Williams' splendid book *Culture and Society* I found myself saying that his "organic" vision of socialism seemed to me "a bit too harmonious and, if I may risk being misunderstood, a bit too wholesome... There is lacking in his outlook a touch of anarchist disaffection that would burst out no matter 'who is the State.' For even in societies toward which they can be friendly, intellectuals, if they are to remain intellectuals, will probably have to be critics, irritants, 'outsiders' living by the values of minority culture."

There is a real difference here; but, without trying to minimize it, I wonder whether there might not be some truth in the criticism each makes of the other. And at the risk of presumption I can't help wondering whether in just one respect we socialist intellectuals in

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America may not be a little ahead of our European friends. Not because, God knows, we are wiser than they, but simply because the trend toward the "massification" of society has gone further on this side of the Atlantic than the other. I suspect that in their stress upon the working class neighborhood and its indigenous culture men like Williams and Hoggart are turning to something that is fast slipping away, perhaps because it *is* fast slipping away. The one advantage we American socialists may have is that the workings of history seem to have allowed us, a few moments before the Europeans, to look at the Medusa face of tomorrow.

Dubious privilege!

IX

To what I have just said about the Europeans there is one major exception: the Polish "revisionist" intellectuals. When they first began pouring out their ideas a few years ago, one felt an enormous elation: it was as if, from the other side of the moon, voices came to us speaking the same language. Whole passages from their work seem almost to evoke or anticipate what we have been trying to say. These men, until Gomulka gradually silenced them, were the liveliest political thinkers in the contemporary effort to revive the socialist tradition. Through bitter experience they had learned the value of freedom. Though some of them were forced to function within the rigid framework of a one party regime, they were really democratic socialists—political *marranos*—in their outlook and emphasis. They remain our true comrades.

X

Abstract man multiplies; a progressive flattening of personality takes place, irrespective of salary categories, standards of living, bureaucratic rank. Demoralized by their strangeness to themselves and by their lack of control over their relations with others, members of every class yield themselves to artificially constructed mass egoes that promise to restore their link with the past and the future. Instead of the self-creating revolt of nothings at the base of society, history appears to hold out a horror-Utopia of universal de-individualization headed by leaders who are their masks. Within this half-formed world of real spectres, Marx's criticism of modern industrial civilization as centered on the proletarian void offers at least a conceptual foothold. The weapon of criticism is undoubtedly inadequate. Who on that account would choose to surrender it?

This passage comes from an essay by Harold Rosenberg which appeared a few years ago in DISSENT. And to all our friends who feel that we do not do enough, or do not do it well enough, or do not offer them the conceptual assurances they know we neither can nor should, let me repeat the last two sentences: "The weapon of criticism is undoubtedly inadequate. Who on that account would choose to surrender it?"

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A MAJOR DOCUMENT FROM RUSSIA:

ON SOCIALIST REALISM

Introduction

The title of this article does not even begin to convey its importance as an intellectual and historical document. It is, we believe, one of the most significant pieces of writing to come out of contemporary Russia; and we take pride in presenting here the first full English translation.

The article was written in Russia by a Russian writer, 37 or 38 years old. He managed to convey it to Paris, where the liberal monthly Esprit *published a French translation. It was written* before *the Pasternak affair, and has, of course, not appeared in Russia itself.*

The version that follows has been translated from the Russian by Mr. George Dennis. Mr. Dennis notes:

"The style tells a good deal about the man. The article is written in poetic prose, the oldest type of Russian prose, whose persistence in Russia was recently revealed to the West by the publication of Doctor Zhivago. *This persistence may well be news also to the Russians: this article should help to allay the fears recently expressed by Constantine Paustovski, a talented and humane Soviet writer, that the Russian language would be completely replaced by a party jargon.*

"To a Western reader, Russian poetic prose does not always make easy reading. It is not only peppered with verse; it is also a series of lyrical outbursts. I can assure the reader that the original contains even more question marks and exclamation points than the translation. Moreover, the prose is shot through with poetic images, metaphors and rhythms. Fundamentally, it is a personal prose as well as a product of its national environment.

"A closer stylistic analysis will reveal that the poetic prose of this article has been formed by a process of historical accumulation. The succession of strata can still be seen, as in a geological formation. Over the original Slav stratum is a strong layer of Byzantinism, mainly contributed by the Orthodox religion. Then comes a layer contributed by the West, in this case mostly German idealistic philosophy and French literature. The top layer is Marxist or, if you wish, Communist. The Russian language has assimilated them all, just as, no doubt, it is now engaged in assimilating American influences . . .

"The best clue to unravelling the ambiguities in which the author's attitude toward Communism is inevitably involved," continues Mr. Dennis, "is the irony which sets the tone of the article. There is at least one example of it on every page. This kind of irony has been the favorite literary weapon of Russian and, indeed, European writers . . .

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"It might help American readers to understand the outlook of the author if they recalled how Swift, savagely lashing out against the English Ascendency in Ireland, remained part of that Ascendency. Our author has freed one of his feet from Communism. He uses it to kick Communism, and some of his kicks are pretty hard. But his other foot is still stuck in Communism—and stuck fast."

To these remarks very little need be added. We believe that this article presents an incomparable portrait of a highly intelligent and cultivated man, whose sentiments, ironies, even confusions may well be shared by other literate Russians. For democrats and socialists in the West, it is a moral responsibility to listen to the voice of this man with the greatest attention and sympathy.—EDITORS.

What is socialist realism? What is the meaning of this strange and jarring phrase? Can there be a socialist, capitalist, Christian or Mohammedan realism? Does this irrational concept have a natural existence? Perhaps it does not exist at all, perhaps it is only the nightmare of a terrified intellectual during the dark and magical night of Stalin's dictatorship? Perhaps a crude propaganda trick of Zhdanov or a senile fancy of Gorki? Is it fiction, myth or propaganda?

Such questions, we are told, are often asked in the West. They are hotly debated in Poland. They are also current among us, where they arouse eager minds, tempting them into the heresies of doubt and criticism.

Meanwhile, the productions of socialist realism are measured in billions of printed sheets, kilometers of canvas and film, centuries of hours. A thousand critics, theoreticians, art experts, pedagogues are beating their heads and straining their voices to justify, explain and interpret its material existence and dialectical character. The head of the state himself, the First Secretary of the CP, tears himself away from pressing economic tasks to pronounce some weighty words on the country's esthetic problems.*

The most exact definition of socialist realism is given in a statute of the Association of Soviet Writers: "Socialist realism is the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands from the artist a truthful and historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism." (First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, 1934, p. 716.)

This innocent formula is the foundation on which the entire edifice of socialist realism was erected. It includes the link between socialist realism and the realism of the past, as well as its new and distinguishing quality. The link lies in the *truthfulness* of the representation; the difference, in the ability to seize the *revolutionary development* and to educate readers in accordance with that development, *in the spirit of socialism.* The old realists, or, as they are sometimes called, critical realists (because they criticized bourgeois society), men like Balzac, Tolstoy and Chekhov, truthfully represented life as it is. But not having been instructed in the genius and teachings of Marx, they could not foresee the future victories of socialism, and they certainly did not know the real and concrete roads to these victories.

* This refers to Khrushchev's speeches to Soviet intellectuals, collected and published in 1957 under the title, *For a Close Link Between Literature and Art and the Life of the People.*

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The socialist realist, armed with the doctrine of Marx and enriched by the experience of struggles and victories, is inspired by the vigilant attention of his friend and teacher, the Communist Party. While representing the present, he listens to the march of history and looks toward the future. He sees the "visible traits of Communism," invisible to the ordinary eye. His creative work is a step forward from the art of the past, the highest peak of the artistic development of mankind and the most realistic of realisms.

Such, in a few words, is the general scheme of our art. It is amazingly simple, yet sufficiently elastic to comprehend Gorki, Mayakovski, Fadeev, Aragon, Ehrenburg and hundreds of others. But we cannot understand this concept at all as long as we skim the surface of the dry formula and do not penetrate into its deep and hidden meaning.

The gist of this formula—"the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development"—is founded on the concept of Purpose with a capital P. The Purpose is an all-embracing ideal, towards which truthfully represented reality ascends in an undeviating revolutionary movement. To direct this movement towards its end and to help the reader approach it more closely by transforming his consciousness—this is the Purpose of socialist realism, the most purposeful art of our time . . .

THE CONCEPT OF PURPOSE

Our art, like our culture and our society, is teleological through and through. It is subject to a higher destiny, from which it gains its title of nobility. In the final reckoning we live only to speed the coming of Communism.

A tendency towards purpose is part of human nature. I extend my hand to receive the coins. I go to a movie to spend some time with a pretty girl. I write a novel to earn glory and the gratitude of posterity. Each of my conscious moves is purposeful.

Animals do not have such long-range intentions. They are moved by instincts. They bite to bite, and not for the purpose of biting. They don't think about tomorrow, wealth, God. They live without facing any complex problems. But man invariably wants what he has not got. This quality of our nature finds its outlet in a feverish activity. We transform nature into our own image and turn nature into an object. Aimless rivers become arteries of communication. Aimless trees become paper filled with destiny.

Our abstract thought is no less teleological. Man explores the world by attributing to it his own purposefulness. He asks: "What is the use of the sun?" and answers: "To give light and heat." The animism of primitive peoples is the first attempt to conquer senseless chaos by endowing it with many aims, and to animate the indifferent universe with a life useful to man.

Science has not freed us from the childish questions of "Why?" Behind the causal relations that it establishes we find the hidden and distorted purposefulness of natural phenomena. Science says: "man descends from the monkey" instead of saying: "the destiny of the monkey is to become man."

However man may have originated, his appearance and purpose are inseparable from God—that is, from the highest idea of purpose which is accessible to us, if not through our understanding, then through our wish that there should be such a purpose. This is the final purpose of all that is and of all that isn't, and is the in-

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finite—and probably purposeless—Purpose in itself. For how could Purpose have purposes?

There are periods of history when the presence of Purpose is evident, when minor passions are absorbed in the striving for God and He openly calls mankind to Himself. Thus arose the culture of Christianity which seized the Purpose in what is, perhaps, its most inaccessible meaning. Then came the era of individualism which proclaimed the freedom of the individual as the Purpose and set about worshipping this purpose with the aid of the Renaissance, humanism, superman, democracy, Robespierre, banquets and other forms of prayer. And now we have entered the era of a new world-wide system—that of socialist purposefulness.

A blinding light pours from this summit of thought. "A world that we can imagine, more material and better suited to human needs than Christian paradise"—thus was Communism defined by the Soviet writer Leonid Leonov.

Words fail us when we try to talk about it. We choke with enthusiasm and we use mostly negative comparisons to describe the splendor that is waiting for us. Then, under Communism, there will be no rich and no poor, no money, wars, jails, frontiers, diseases—and maybe no death. Everybody will eat and work as much as he likes, and labor will bring joy instead of sorrow. As Lenin promised, we will make toilets of pure gold . . . But what am I talking about?

> What words and what colors are needed
> To describe these grandiose heights
> Where whores are as modest as virgins
> And hangmen as tender as mothers?

The modern mind cannot imagine anything more beautiful and splendid than the Communist ideal. The best that it can do is to restore to circulation old ideals of Christian love and the liberty of the individual. But it has been unable so far to set up a new Purpose.

Where socialism is concerned, the Western liberal individualist or Russian sceptical intellectual is about in the same position as the cultured and intelligent Roman with regard to victorious Christianity. He called the new faith of the crucified God barbarious and naive, laughed over the lunatics that worshipped the cross—that Roman guillotine—and believed that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, Resurrection, etc., made no sense whatsoever. But it was quite above his powers to advance any serious arguments against the *ideal* of Christ as such. True, he could say that the best parts of the moral code of Christianity were borrowed from Plato, just as contemporary Christians assert here and there that Communism took its noble aims from the Gospel. But could he say that God conceived as Love or Goodness was evil or monstrous? And can we say that the universal happiness, promised for the Communist future, is evil?

> For don't I know that blindfold thrusts
> Will not make darkness yield to light?
> Am I a monster? Is not the happiness
> of millions
> Closer to me than empty luck for a few?
> PASTERNAK

We are helpless before the enchanting beauty of Communism. We have not lived long enough to invent a new Purpose and to go beyond ourselves—into the distance that is beyond Communism.

It was the genius of Marx that he proved the earthly paradise, of which others had dreamed before him, was actually the Purpose which Fate destined for man. With the aid of Marx,

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Communism passed from moral efforts of isolated individuals—"Oh, where are you, golden age?"—into the sphere of universal history, which became purposeful as never before and turned into mankind's march toward Communism.

At once, everything fell into place. An iron necessity and a strict hierarchical order harnessed the flow of centuries. The ape stood up on its hind legs and began its triumphant procession towards Communism. The system of primitive Communism arose because it was fated to grow into slavery; slavery, to give birth to feudalism; feudalism, towards capitalism; and finally capitalism, so that it could give way to Communism. That is all! The magnificent aim is achieved, the pyramid is crowned, history at an end.

A truly religious person relates all the splendid variety of life to his divinity. He cannot understand another faith. He believes in the Purpose so that he can despise other purposes. He shows the same fanaticism—or if you prefer, *printsipialnost'*—with regard to history.* A consistent Christian views the entire history previous to the birth of Christ as the prehistory of Christ. From the point of view of the monotheist, the pagans existed only to call upon themselves the will of the only God and, after a suitable preparation, to become monotheists.

It can therefore hardly surprise us that, in another religious system, ancient Rome has become an indispensable stage on the road to Communism. Or that the Crusades are not explained by their internal dynamics, by the ardent efforts of Christians, but by the action of the omnipresent forces of production that are now ensuring the collapse of capitalism and the triumph of socialism. True faith is incompatible with toleration. Neither is it compatible with historicism, i.e. with toleration applied to the past. And though the Marxists call themselves historical materialists, their historicism is actually reduced to a desire to regard life as a march towards Communism. Other movements are of little interest to them. Whether they are right or wrong is a matter of dispute. What is beyond dispute is that they are consistent.

If we ask a Westerner why the French Revolution was necessary, we will receive a great many different answers. One will reply that it happened to save France; another, that it took place to lead the nation into an abyss of moral experiments; a third, that it came to give to the world the great principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; a fourth, that the French Revolution was not necessary at all. But if you ask any Soviet schoolboy—to say nothing of the beneficiaries of our higher education—you will invariably receive the correct and exhaustive reply: the French Revolution was needed to clear the way to Communism.

The man who received a Marxist education knows the meaning of both past and future. He knows why this or that idea, event, emperor or military leader was needed. It is a long time since men had such an exact knowledge of the meaning of the world's destiny—not since the Middle Ages, most likely. It is our great privilege to possess this knowledge once more.

The teleological nature of Marxism is most obvious in the works of its latest theorists. They brought to Marx-

* *Printsipialnost'* is a Russian word with no English equivalent. It describes the mental habit of referring every matter, however small, concrete or trivial, to lofty and abstract principles.

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ism the clarity, strength and rigor of military orders and economic decrees. A good example is Stalin's judgment on the role of ideas, taken from the fourth chapter of the *Short Course of History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*:

"There exist different ideas and theories. There are old ideas and theories which have outlived their time and serve the interests of outdated forces of society. Their significance lies in their hampering the growth of the society and its forward march. There are also new, advanced ideas and theories which serve the interests of the advanced forces of society. Their significance lies in facilitating the growth of the society and its forward march."

As long as its famous author lived, the *Short Course* was the bedside book of every Soviet citizen. The entire literate population was constantly urged to study it and in particular its fourth chapter, containing the quintessence of the Marxist creed and written by Stalin himself. A quotation from V. Il'enkov's novel *The Great Highway* illustrates the universal validity that was attached to the *Short Course*:

"Father Degtyarev brought in a small volume and said: 'Everything is said here, in the fourth chapter.' Vinkentii Ivanovich took the book and thought: 'There is no book on this earth that contains everything that a man needs . . .' But Vinkentii Ivanovich [a typical sceptical intellectual] soon realized that he was wrong and accepted Degtyarev's view, which was that of all advanced people: This book 'contains everything that a man needs.'"

Every word of this quotation is pervaded by the spirit of purposefulness. Even the ideas that do not favor the movement towards the Purpose have their destiny: to hamper the movement towards the Purpose (once, no doubt, the destiny of Satan). "Idea," "superstructure," "base," "law of nature," "economics," "forces of production"—all these abstract and impersonal concepts suddenly come to life, are covered with flesh and blood and become like gods and heroes, angels and devils. They create purposes and suddenly, from the pages of philosophical treatises and scientific investigations, there resounds the voice of the great religious Mystery: "The base produces the superstructure so that it can serve the base." (J. Stalin: *Marxism and Linguistic Questions.*)

THE PURPOSE OF THE CREATION

This is not the only happy turn of phrase by Stalin which the author of the Bible might envy. The specific teleology of Marxist thought consists in leading *all* concepts and objects to the Purpose, referring them all to the Purpose and defining them all through the Purpose. The history of all epochs and nations is but the history of humanity's march towards Communism, and the history of the world's thought happened, so to say, in order to bring forth "scientific materialism," i.e. Marxism, i.e. the philosophy of Communism. The history of philosophy, proclaimed Zhdanov, "is the history of the birth, rise and development of the scientific world view and its laws. As materialism grew and developed in the struggle against idealism, so the history of philosophy is the history of the struggle between materialism and idealism." (A. A. Zhdanov, "Contribution to the Discussion of G. F. Aleksandrov's *History of Western European Philosophy*," June 24, 1947.) These proud words seem like the voice of God Himself exclaiming: "The

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whole history is My history, and since I assert myself in the struggle with Satan, world history is also the history of My struggle with Satan."

And so it rises before us, the sole Purpose of all Creation, as splendid as eternal life and as compulsory as death. And we fling ourselves towards it, breaking all barriers and rejecting anything that might hamper our frantic course. We free ourselves without regret from belief in an afterlife, from love of our neighbor, from freedom of the individual and other prejudices, by now rather shopworn and looking all the sorrier by comparison with the great Ideal before us. Thousands of martyrs of the revolution gave up their lives for the new religion and surpassed the first Christians by their sufferings, their steadfastness and their holiness:

> Polish commanders
> Branded our backs with
> Five-pointed stars.
> Mamontov's bands
> Buried us alive
> Up to our necks.
> The Japanese
> Burned us in fireplaces
> Or railroad engines
> And poured lead and tin
> Into our mouths.
> They all roared:
> "Abjure!"
> But from our burning throats
> Only three words came:
> "Long
> Live
> Communism!"
>
> MAYAKOVSKI

To our new God we sacrificed not only our lives, our blood and our bodies. We also sacrificed our snow-white soul, after staining it with all the filth of the world.

It is fine to be gentle, to drink tea with preserves, to plant flowers and cultivate love, non-resistance to evil and other philanthropies. But whom did they save and what did they change in this world, these ancient virgins of both sexes, these egoists of humanism who bought themselves an easy conscience penny by penny and rented themselves a cozy corner in the heavenly almshouses?

We did not want salvation for ourselves but for all of humanity. Instead of sentimental sighs, individual perfection and amateur dramatics for the benefit of the hungry, we set about to correct the universe according to the best of models, the shining model of the Purpose which we approached ever more closely.

So that prisons should vanish forever, we built new prisons. So that all frontiers should fall, we surrounded ourselves with a Chinese wall. So that work should become a rest and a pleasure, we introduced forced labor. So that not one drop of blood be shed any more, we killed and killed and killed.

In the name of the Purpose we turned to the means that our enemies used: we glorified Imperial Russia, we wrote lies in *Pravda* [Truth], we set a new Tsar on the now empty throne, we introduced officers' epaulettes and tortures . . . Sometimes we felt that only one final sacrifice was needed for the triumph of Communism—the renunciation of Communism.

O Lord, O Lord—pardon us our sins!

Finally, it was created, our world, in the image and likeness of God. It is not yet Communism, but it is already quite close to Communism. And so we rise, stagger with weariness, encircle the earth with bloodshot eyes, and do not find around us what we hoped to find.

Why do you laugh, scum? Why do you claw with your well-cared nails

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the spots of blood and dirt that have stuck to our jackets and uniforms? You say that this is not Communism, that we took the wrong turning and that we are further from Communism now than when we started. Well then, where is *your* Kingdom of God? Show it! Where is the free personality of the superman that you promised?

Achievements are never identical with the original aim. The means used to reach the aim change its original appearance into something unrecognizable. The stakes of the Inquisition helped to establish the Gospel; but what is left of the Gospel after the stakes have done their work? Yet all of them—the stakes of the Inquisition and the Gospel, the night of Saint Bartholomew and Saint Bartholomew himself—add up to one great Christian culture.

Yes, we live in Communism. It resembles our aspirations about as much as the Middle Ages resembled Christ, modern Western man resembles the free superman, and man resembles God. But all the same, there is *some resemblance,* isn't there?

This resemblance lies in the subordination of all our actions, thoughts and longings to that sole Purpose, which may have long ago become a meaningless word but still has a hypnotic effect on us and pushes us onward and onward—we don't know where. And, obviously, art and literature could not but get caught in the meshes of that system and become, as Lenin predicted, "a small wheel and a small screw" of the gigantic state machine. "Our magazines, both scientific and artistic, cannot be apolitical... The strength of Soviet literature, the most advanced in the world, is that it is a literature for which there can be no other interests than those of the people and of the state. (Decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b), August 14, 1946.)

It must be remembered, when reading this decree of the Central Committee, that the interests of the people and of the state—which, incidentally, are exactly the same from the point of view of the state—have but a single aim: the all-pervading and all-absorbing Communism. "Literature and art are part of the whole people's struggle for Communism... The highest social destiny of art and literature is to mobilize the people to the struggle for new advances in the building of Communism." (N. S. Khrushchev, "For a Close Link Between Literature and Art and the Life of the People," *Kommunist* magazine, number 12, 1957.)

When Western writers deplore our lack of freedom of speech, their starting point is their belief in the freedom of the individual. This is the foundation of their culture, but it is organically alien to Communism. A true Soviet writer, a true Marxist, will not accept these reproaches, and will not even know what they are all about. What freedom—if the comparison be permitted—does the religious person require from God? The freedom to praise God still more ardently?

Contemporary Christians, who have broken their spiritual fast and accepted the spirit of individualism, with its free elections, free enterprise and free press, occasionally abuse the phrase "freedom of choice" that Christ is supposed to have bequeathed us. This sounds like a dubious borrowing from the parliamentary system to which they are accustomed, for it bears no resemblance to the Kingdom of God, if only because no president or prime minister is ever elected in paradise. Even the most liberal God offers only one freedom of choice: to believe or

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not to believe, to be for Him or for Satan, to go to paradise or to hell. Communism offers just about the same right. If you don't want to believe, you can go to jail—which is by no means worse than hell. And for the man who believes, for the Soviet writer to whom Communism is the purpose of his own and humanity's existence (and otherwise there is no place for him either in our literature or in our society), there can be no such dilemma. For the man who believes in Communism, as Khrushchev correctly noted in one of his latest cultural pronouncements, "for the artist who truly wants to serve his people, the question does not arise of whether he is free or not in his creative work. For him, the question of which approach to the phenomena of reality to choose is clear. He need not conform or force himself; the true representation of life from the point of view of Communist *partiinost'** is a necessity of his soul. He holds firmly to these positions, and affirms and defends them in the work."

It is with the same joyous facility that this artist accepts the directives of the party and the government, from the Central Committee and its First Secretary. For who, if not the party and its leader, knows best what kind of art we need? It is, after all, the party that leads us to the Purpose in accordance with all the rules of Marxism-Leninism, the party that lives and works in constant contact with God. And so we have in it and in its leader the wisest and most experienced guide, who is competent in all questions of industry, linguistics, music, philosophy, painting, biology, etc. He is our Commander, our Ruler, our High Priest. To doubt his words is as sinful as to doubt the will of God.

These are the esthetical and psychological concepts the knowledge of which is indispensable to anyone who would penetrate the secret of socialist realism.

II

Works produced by socialist realists vary in style and content. But in all of them the Purpose is present, whether directly or indirectly, open or veiled. They are panegyrics on Communism, satires on some of its many enemies, or descriptions of life "in its revolutionary development," i.e. life moving towards Communism.

Having chosen his subject, the Soviet writer views it from a definite angle. He wants to discover what potentialities it contains that point to the splendid Purpose. Most subjects of Soviet literature have in common a remarkable purposefulness. They all develop in one direction, and a direction well known in advance. This direction may exhibit variations in accordance with time, place, conditions, etc.; but it is invariable in its course and its destiny: to remind the reader once more of the triumph of Communism.

Each work of socialist realism, even before it appears, is thus assured of a happy ending. The ending may be sad for the hero, who runs every possible risk in his fight for Communism; but it is happy from the point of view of the superior Purpose; and the author never neglects to proclaim his firm belief in our final victory, either directly or through a speech of his

* *Partiinost'* is the point of view that considers everything in terms of the correct party line.

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dying hero. Lost illusions, broken hopes, unfulfilled dreams, so characteristic of literature of other eras and systems, are contrary to socialist realism. Even when it produces a tragedy, it is an *Optimistic Tragedy,* the title of Vishnevski's play in which the heroine dies at the end but Communism triumphs.

A comparison between some representative titles of Soviet and Western literature is revealing. *Journey to the End of the Night* (Celine); *Death in the Afternoon* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Hemingway); *Everyone Dies Alone* (Fallada); *A Time to Live and a Time to Die* (Remarque); *Death of a Hero* (Aldington) are all in minor key. *Happiness* (Pavlenko); *First Joys* (Fedin); *It is Well!* (Mayakovski); *Fulfilled Wishes* (Kaverin); *Light over the Earth* (Babayevski); *The Victors* (Bagritski); *The Victor* (Simonov); *The Victor* (Chirikov); *Spring in the Victory Collective Farm* (Gribachev), and so on, are all in a major key.

The splendid aim towards which the action develops is sometimes presented directly at the end of the work. This method was brilliantly used by Mayakovski. All his major works after the Revolution end with passages about Communism or with fantastic scenes describing life in the future Communist state (*Mystery Bouffe; 150,000,000; About This; Vladimir Il'ich Lenin; It is Well!; With a Full Voice*). Gorki, who during the Soviet era wrote mainly about the days before the Revolution, ended most of his novels and plays—*The Artamonov Affair; The Life of Klim Samgin; Egor Bulichev and Others; Dostigaev and Others*—with a vision of the victorious Revolution, which was a stage on the way to Communism, and the concluding gesture of the old world.

Even when the book does not end with such a grandiose denouement, it still exists implicitly and symbolically, commanding the development of characters and events. For example, many of our novels and stories deal with the work of a factory, the building of an electricity work, the application of an agricultural decree and so on. An economic task is carried out in the course of the action (e.g. the start of building introduces the plot; the end of building—the denouement). But the task is presented as an indispensable stage on the way towards a higher purpose. In such a purposeful view, even technical processes acquire dramatic tension and can be followed with great interest. The reader finds out step by step how, against all kind of obstacles, the plant was put to work, the "Victory" collective farm gathered a good crop of corn and so on. He closes the book with a sigh of relief and realizes that we have made yet another step towards Communism.

Since Communism is for us the inescapable outcome of the historical process, many of our novels have made the impetuous course of time the mainspring of their action. The course of time, working its way towards the Purpose, works for us. The Soviet writer does not think in Proustian terms. He does not search for lost time; his motto is rather: "Time, march on!" He hastens the course of life and affirms that each day lived is not a loss but a gain for man—because it brings him closer to the desired ideal, even if only by one millimeter.

This purposefulness of the historic processes is linked with the great interest our writers show in history, both recent and remote. Recent historical events like the Civil War and collectivization are landmarks on the road we chose. In more remote eras it is, alas, harder to find the move-

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ment towards Communism. But if the writer concentrates hard enough he will uncover, even in the most remote of times, some phenomenon that might be called progressive because, in the final account, it aided in some way our victories of today. The writers merely anticipate somewhat and give these events the Purpose that they did not yet have. And so the leaders of the past like Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great or the peasant rebel Stenka Razin, though they did not know the word "Communism," still know quite well that our future will be brilliant. They never cease to celebrate this future from the pages of our historical novels, and they constantly gladden the heart of their readers by their astounding perspicacity.

Another subject is offered to our literature by the internal world of man's psychological life. This internal world moves towards the Purpose by dynamics of its own, fights against "the traces of the bourgeois past in its conscience," and re-educates itself under the influence of the party and of surrounding life. A large part of Soviet literature is an "educational novel" which shows the Communist metamorphosis of individuals and entire communities. Many of our books turn around the representation of these moral and psychological processes, which aim at producing the ideal man of the future. One such is Gorki's *Mother,* where an ignorant woman, defeated by life, is transformed into a conscious revolutionary. Written in 1906, this book is generally considered the first example of socialist realism. Or there is Makarenko's Pedagogical Poem about the young criminals who take the road to honest work, or Ostrovski's novel *How the Steel Was Tempered,* i.e. how the steel of our youth was tempered in the fire of the Civil War and the cold of early Communist construction.

As soon as the literary character becomes fully purposeful and conscious of his purposefulness, he can enter that privileged caste which is universally respected and called "positive heroes." This is the Holy of Holies of socialist realism, its cornerstone and main achievement.

THE POSITIVE HERO

The positive hero is not simply a good man. He is a hero illuminated by the light of the most ideal of all ideals. Leonid Leonov called his positive hero "a peak of humanity from whose height the future can be seen." He has either no faults at all or else but a few of them—for example, he sometimes loses his temper a little. These faults have a twofold function. They help the hero to preserve a certain likeness to real men and they provide something to overcome as he raises himself ever higher and higher on the ladder of political morality. However, these faults must be slight or else they would run counter to his basic qualities. It is not easy to enumerate these basic qualities of the positive hero: ideological conviction, courage, intelligence, will power, patriotism, respect for women, self-sacrifice, etc., etc. The most important, of course, are the clarity and directness with which he sees the Purpose and strives towards it. Hence the amazing precision of all his actions, thoughts, tastes, feelings and judgments. He firmly knows what is right and what is wrong; he says plainly "yes" or "no" and does not confuse black with white. For him there are no inner doubts and hesitations, no unanswerable questions and no impenetrable secrets. Faced with the most complex of tasks he easily finds the solution—

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by taking the shortest and most direct route to the Purpose.

The positive hero first appeared in some books of Gorki written in the first decade of the twentieth century. He started by proclaiming to the world: "One must say firmly yes or no!" Many were shocked by the self-assurance and straightforwardness of his formulations, by his tendency to preach at everyone around him and by his pompous monologues celebrating his own virtues. Chekhov, when he managed to read through *The Petty Bourgeois,* frowned with embarrassment and advised Gorki to soften the loud proclamations of his hero. Chekhov feared pretentiousness worse than fire: he viewed such purple passages as a boastfulness foreign to the Russian character.

But Gorki was deaf to such advice. He did not fear the reproaches and sneers of the shocked *intelligentsia* and its repeated assertions that the new hero was dull-witted and narrow-minded. He knew that his hero was the man of the future and that "only men as pitiless, straight and hard as swords will cut their way through." (*The Petty Bourgeois,* 1901.)

Since then the posotive hero has gone through many changes and presented himself in many guises. He unrolled his positive qualities in many ways, grew big and sturdy, and finally drew himself up to his full stature. This happened already in the 1930s, when the Soviet writers dropped their little cliques and their literary tendencies, and accepted, almost unanimously, the best and most advanced trend of all: socialist realism.

To read the books of the last twenty or thirty years is to feel the great power of the positive hero. First he spread in every direction, until he filled all our literature. There are books in which *all* the heroes are positive. This is but natural, once we are coming ever closer to the Purpose. So that if a book about the present deals not with the fight against the enemies but with, say, a model collective farm, then all its characters can and must be positive. To put negative characters in such a situation would, to say the least, be strange. And so we get dramas and novels where all moves smoothly and peacefully. If there is a conflict between the heroes, it is a conflict between good and better, model and supermodel. When these books appeared, their authors—men like Babaevski, Surkov, Sofronov, Virta, Gribachev, etc.—were highly praised and set up as examples for others. True, since the Twentieth Congress—one hardly knows why—our attitude towards them changed somewhat and we apply to them the contemptuous adjective "conflictless." Once Khrushchev came out in defense of these writers, such reproaches were stilled somewhat but they are still levied here and there by intellectuals. They are unjust.

Since we don't want to lose face before the West, we occasionally cease to be consistent and declare that our society is rich in individualities and embraces many interests. And that it has differences of opinion, conflicts and contradictions, and literature is supposed to reflect all that.

True, we differ from each other in age, sex, nationality and even intelligence. But whoever follows the party line knows that these are heterogeneities within a homogeneity, differences of opinion within a single opinion, conflicts within a basic absence of conflict. We have one aim—Communism; one philosophy—Marxism; one art—socialist realism. This was well put

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by a Soviet writer of no great literary gifts but politically irreproachable: "Russia took its own road—that of unanimity... For thousands of years men suffered from differences of opinion. But now we, Soviet men and women, for the first time agree with each other, talk one language that we all understand, and think identically about the main things in life. It is this unanimity that makes us strong and superior to all other people in the world, who are internally torn and socially isolated through their differences of opinion." (V. Il'enkov, *The Great Highway,* a novel which appeared in 1949 and was awarded the Stalin Prize.)*

Beautifully put! Yes we really are all alike and we are not ashamed of it. Those of us who suffer from superfluous differences of thought we punish severely by excluding them from life and literature. There can be no substantial differences of opinion in a country where even the anti-party elements confess their errors and wish to rectify them as soon as possible, and incorrigible enemies of the people ask to be shot. Still less can there be such differences among honest Soviet people and least of all among positive heroes who think only of spreading their virtues all over the world and of re-educating the few remaining dissidents into unanimity.

True, there are still disagreements between the vanguard and the backward and there is still the sharp conflict with the capitalist world that does not let us sleep in peace. But we do not doubt for a single moment that all these contradictions will be resolved, that the world will become unified and Communist and that the last, by competing with each other, shall become the first. This great harmony is the final Purpose of Creation, this beautiful absence of conflict is the future of socialist realism. And so we can hardly reproach those overharmonious writers who have indeed withdrawn from contemporary conflicts but only to glance at the future, i.e. to find out how they can best pay the debt which, as writers, they owe to socialist realism. Babaevski and Surkov have not deviated from the sacred principles of our art, but have rather developed it logically and organically. They embody the higher stage of socialist realism and the embryo of the coming Communist realism.

The growing strength of the positive hero is shown not only in his incredible multiplication—he has far surpassed other kinds of literary character in quantity, put them into shade and sometimes replaced them altogether. His qualitative growth has also been remarkable. As he approaches the Purpose, he becomes ever more positive, great and splendid. He also becomes more and more persuaded of his own dignity, especially when he compares himself to contemporary Western man and realizes his immeasurable superiority. "But our Soviet man has left *them* far behind. He is now close to the peak while they are still wandering in the foothills"—this is the way simple peasants talk in our novels. And the poet runs out of words when he tries to describe this superiority, this incomparable positiveness of our positive hero:

> Nobody rose so high
> For centuries and centuries.

* One cannot but recall in this connection Khrushchev's *cri de coeur* against the Jews: "They are all individualists and all intellectuals. They want to talk about everything, they want to discuss everything, they want to debate everything—and they come to totally different conclusions!"

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You are above all glory,
You are beyond all praise.
M. ISAKOVSKI

The novel *Russian Forest* by Leonid Leonov, the first writer to be awarded a Lenin prize—which replaced the Stalin prize—is the best work of socialist realism for the last five years or so. It contains a remarkable scene. The brave birl Polya, entrusted with a dangerous mission, makes her way to the rear of the enemy—the action takes place during the Patriotic War. As a camouflage she is supposed to collaborate with the Germans. She plays this part for a while in talking to a Nazi officer, but with great difficulty: it is morally painful to her to talk the enemy's language. Finally she cannot stand it any more and reveals her true self and her superiority to the German officer: "I am a girl of my time . . . maybe just an ordinary girl, but I am the world's tomorrow . . . , and you should stand up, yes, stand up when you talk to me, if you have a trace of self-respect left! But there you sit, only because you are nothing but a horse that the Chief Hangman puts through its paces . . . Well, don't just sit there, do something! . . . Get up and show me the place where Soviet girls are shot!"

DETERMINATION A SECOND POWER

The fact that by this pompous tirade Polya betrays herself and moreover harms the mission with which she has been entrusted does not disturb the author in the least. He finds an easy way out of the resulting situation. The noble purity of Polya's heart converts a *starosta** who happened to listen to the conversation. His conscience suddenly awakens, he shoots at the German, loses his life and saves Polya's.

But this is not what matters. It does not matter so much that the *starosta* moved, within the batting of an eyelid, from the rearguard to the vanguard. What matters very much more is that we have here the straight and immutable determination of the positive hero raised, we might say, to the second power. Polya's behavior may seem stupid from the point of view of common sense. But it is filled with an immense religious and esthetic significance. Under no circumstances, even to further his task, does the positive hero dare so much as to look negative. Even in the face of the enemy who must be outwitted and cheated he must demonstrate his positive qualities. They cannot be hidden or camouflaged: they are written on his brow and they sound in his every word. And so he defeats the enemy not by cleverness, wits or physical strength but by his proud attitude alone.

Polya's deed is the key to much that to the non-believer appears grossly exaggerated, stupid and false—especially the positive hero's propensity to pontificate on elevated themes. He makes Communist assertions at home and at work, in friend's homes and on lonely walks, on the love couch and on the death bed. But this is not a contradiction; positive heroes were created to present to the world, on every suitable and unsuitable occasion, a model of purposefulness:

Measure
Each detail
By the great
Purpose
MAYAKOVSKI

Only men who are as straight and hard as swords will cut their way through.
GORKI

Never before have there been heroes like this. Though Soviet writers are proud of the great traditions of 19th century Russian literature which they

* A peasant official put in charge of the village by the Germans.

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want to follow in every possible way and sometimes actually do follow (even though they constantly upbraid Western writers for slavishly imitating outworn literary canons) the positive hero of socialist realism is a break with the tradition, not its continuation.

A very different type of hero prevailed in the last century, and Russian culture lived and thought differently then. Compared with the fanatical religiosity of our time, the 19th century seems atheist, tolerant, disoriented. It was soft and shrivelled, feminine and melancholy, full of doubts, inner contradictions and pangs of conscience. Chernyshevski and Pobedonostsev, the great radical and the great reactionary, were perhaps the only two men of the century who really believed in God. Of course, an incalculable number of peasants and old women also believed in God; but they were not the makers of history and culture. Culture was made by a handful of mournful sceptics who thirsted for God simply because they had no God.

But you might object: How about Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, how about the thousands of other "seekers after God," from the Populists to Merezhkovski, whose search of God has lasted well into the middle of *our* century? I assume that to search means not to have. He who has, who really believes, does not search. And what should he search for, if everything is clear and all that he has to do is to *follow* God? God is not found; He finds us and comes upon us. When He has found us, we cease to search and start to act, doing His will.

The 19th century was a century of searching, of ardent or calm aspirations, unwilling or unable to find a solid place under the sun, torn by uncertainties and dualism. Dostoevsky regretted that the Russian was so broad—he should be narrowed, he felt. But Dostoevsky was so broad himself that he could embrace within himself both Orthodoxy and nihilism. He could find room in his soul for all the Karamazovs—Alyosha, Mitya, Ivan, Fedor (some would add Smerdyakov). We don't know to this day which of them predominated. For breadth excludes faith: no wonder we narrowed ourselves down to Marxism, thus fulfilling Dostoevsky's wish. Dostoevsky fully understood the temptations of breadth, eternally disputed with himself and passionately wished to end these disputes, offensive to the one God.

This thirst for God, this wish to believe arose—as did the search—in a spiritual desert. It was not yet faith, and if the wish preceded faith—Blessed are they who thirst!—it is like hunger preceding a meal... The great hunger of the 19th century perhaps conditioned us Russians to throw ourselves so greedily upon the food prepared by Marx and to devour it even before we had time to analyze its taste, smell and consequences. But this hundred years' hunger was itself caused by the catastrophic absence of food: it was a hunger of godlessness. That is why it proved so exhausting and felt so unbearable, making us "go among the people," turn radical and renegade and suddenly remember that we are, after all, Christians. ... But there was no relief anywhere:

> I want to make peace with heaven,
> I want to love, I want to pray
> I want to believe in the good.

THE RUSSIAN DEMON

But who is it that cries so anxiously for faith? None other than the *Demon* of Lermontov's poem.* It is the

* Lermontov, the great romantic poet, wrote this work in 1842—Tr.

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very "spirit" of doubt that has torn us so long and so painfully. He confirms that it is not the saints that thirst for God but those who have no God and have left Him.

It is a very Russian Demon. He is too inconsistent in his passion for evil to figure as a full Devil and too inconsistent in his repentance to make his peace with God and rejoin the obedient angels. His tone is not straightforward but ambiguous—"not day and not night, not light and not dark." There are only semi-tones, the secret glitter of twilight that was later glimpsed by the symbolist poet Blok and the symbolist painter Wrubel.

A consistent atheism, an extreme and inflexible denial of God, resembles religion more than this vague incertitude. For this is the crux of the Demon's problem: he has no faith and he suffers from lack of faith. His is the eternal motion upwards and downwards, backwards and forwards, between heaven and hell.

Remember what happened to the Demon? He fell in love with Tamara, that divine beauty incarnated in a ravishing woman, and decided to believe in God. But as soon as he kissed Tamara she died, killed by his touch. She was taken from him, and he was once more alone in his anguished unbelief.

For a century this was also the story of Russian culture, which had been possessed by the Demon even before Lermontov. Russia went into a frenzied search for an ideal; and no sooner did she touch heaven than she fell. The slightest contact with God led to denying Him, and with the denial came the anguish of unrealized faith.

The universal genius of Pushkin took note of this collision in *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* and other early poems; but it was only in *Eugene Onegin* that he unfolded the theme in its full amplitude. The plot of *Onegin* is a simple anecdote: as long as Tatiana loves Onegin and is willing to belong to him, he is indifferent to her; but when she marries another, he falls in love with her passionately and hopelessly. Embedded in this banal story are contradictions on which Russian literature has dwelled to the days of Chekhov and Blok: contradictions of a spirit without God and of a Purpose irrevocably lost.

The central hero of this literature—Onegin, Pechorin of Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time*, Beltov of Herzen's *Whose Fault?*, Lavretski of Turgenev's *Nest of Gentlefolk* and Rudin of his novel of that name—is usually called "the superfluous man." For all his generous impulses he is unable to find a destiny and he presents a lamentable example of a purposelessness that is of no use to anybody. He is, as a rule, a reflexive character, with tendencies to self-analysis and self-flagellation. His life is full of unrealized projects, and his fate is sad and slightly ridiculous. A woman usually plays a fatal part in it.

Russian literature is full of love stories in which an inadequate man and a beautiful woman meet and part without achieving anything. The fault, of course, lies with the man, who does not know how to love his lady as she deserves, actively and with a purpose. Instead, he yawns with boredom, like Onegin and Rudin, or else he kills his beloved, like Aleko in Pushkin's *Gypsies* or Arbenin in Lermontov's *Masquerade*.

If only the hero were at least a low fellow, incapable of higher feelings! But no, he is a noble creature and the most attractive woman boldly offers him her heart and hand. But instead of rejoicing and taking life with

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a song, he commits some irresponsible acts and, against his own desires, does everything he can to ensure that his beloved shall not become his.

Judging by the literature of the time, all hearts were broken in 19th century Russia and no children were born for a while. But the writers were not describing the actual life and customs of the Russian nobility; they were engaged in depth metaphysics of an aimlessly agitated spirit. In this literature, woman was the touchstone of man. His relations with her bare his weakness and, compromised by her strength and beauty, he descends from the stage on which a heroic action was to be played, bows to fate and sneaks out into nothingness with the shameful cry of a base, useless, superfluous man.

The women, those innumerable Tatianas, Lizas, Natalias, Bellas and Ninas [Tatiana is the heroine of *Eugene Onegin;* Lisa of *A Nest of Gentlefolk;* Bella of *A Hero of Our Time*], shine like an ideal, chaste and beyond the reach of Onegins and Pechorins, who love them so clumsily and unsuccessfully. For Russian literature they served as a synonym of the ideal, as symbol of a higher Purpose.

For woman is generally considered a beautiful, pure and nebulous creature. Not too much is asked from her: she need not be concrete and definite to save man; it is enough that she be pure and beautiful. And since she occupies, like every Purpose, a passive and waiting position, her beautiful, magical, mysterious and not too concrete nature permits her to represent a higher stage of the ideal and to serve as a substitute for the absent and desired Purpose.

This was the woman that the 19th century found most to its liking. She impressed it by her vagueness, her mysteriousness and her tenderness. Pushkin's dreamy Tatiana opened up an age; the "Beautiful Lady" to whom Blok dedicated his first collected poems closed it. Tatiana was indispensable so that Onegin should suffer *through the absence of somebody.* And, concluding a love story that lasted for a century, Blok took the Beautiful Lady as his Bride, only to betray Her and to lose Her and to torment himself all his life by the purposelessness of his existence.

Blok's poem *The Twelve*—a work at the boundary between two hostile and mutually exclusive cultures—contains an episode that puts a full stop to the love theme of the 19th century. The Red Guard Petka kills, against his will and in a fit of anger, his sweetheart, the prostitute Katka. The tragic murder and the sorrows of lost love resuscitate the old drama, known to us from the days of Lermontov's *Masquerade* and *Demon.* Blok himself used it in many variations—did not the fool Petka and big-mouthed Katka, with her new boy friend Harlequin-Vanka, issue from Blok's own Pierrot and Columbine? But if the old heroes, the Demons and Arbenins, just turn their emptied soul inside out and freeze into a hopeless sorrow, Petka, who followed in their footsteps, is not allowed to do it. His more politically conscious comrades rouse him and re-educate him:

> You sure go on and on, you bastard,
> What are you? A little girl?
> Sure, you want to turn your soul
> Inside out for us to see? O.K.
> Come on, snap out of it, look smart,
> Get yourself under control!
> .....
> And Petrukha soon slowed down
> His hurried steps
> .....
> He threw back his head
> And became gay once more.

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Thus a new hero was born, never seen before. In bloody battles against the enemy—"I will drink blood for my black-browed beauty!"—and in the works and pains of the new era—"This is no time for babying!"—he cures himself of sterile reflections and useless pangs of conscience. He lifts his head proudly, cheers himself up and enters Soviet literature under the flag of the new God whom Blok, from old habit, calls Jesus Chist:

> Forward, forward
> Working people!

The superfluous man of the 19th century became even more superfluous in the 20th. To the positive hero of the new era he was strange and incomprehensible. The superfluous man seemed to him much more dangerous than the openly negative enemy. After all, the enemy was like the positive hero—clear, straightforward and, in his own way, purposeful. Only his significance was negative—to hinder the movement to the Purpose. But the superfluous man was a creature of different psychological dimensions, inaccessible to computation and regimentation. He is neither for the Purpose nor against the Purpose—he is outside the Purpose. Now this simply cannot be, it is a fiction, a blasphemy. While the whole world, having defined itself with regard to the Purpose, is divided into two antagonistic camps, he feigns not to understand this and keeps mingling his colors in vague and ambiguous schemes. He proclaims that there are no Reds and no Whites but simply people, poor, unfortunate, superfluous people:

> They all lie in a row—
> No line between them.
> Look: soldiers!
> Who's ours? Who's theirs?
> He was white and now he's red—
> The blood reddened him.
> He was red and now he's white—
> Death whitened him.
>
> M. Tsvetayeva*

In the religious struggle, the superfluous man proclaimed his neutrality and expressed his sympathy with both parties, as in these verses of the symbolist poet Voloshin:

> Both here and there, among the ranks
> One voice alone can be heard:
> "Who is not for us, is against us.
> There are no neutrals. Truth is with us."
>
> And I stand alone among them
> In the roaring flame and smoke
> And with all the strength that I have
> Say a prayer for them both.

Such words, as blasphemous as a simultaneous prayer to God and Satan, could not possibly be permitted. It was more correct to proclaim them to be a prayer to the Devil: *"Who is not for us, is against us."* And this is what the new culture did. If it turned again towards the superfluous man, it was only to prove that he was not at all superfluous but rather harmful, dangerous and negative.

Naturally, the leader of the new crusade was Gorki. In 1901 he sketched the first model of the positive hero and attacked those "who were born without faith in the heart," who "never felt that anything was true," who "forever wandered between yes and no."

Gorki roared "No!" at these superfluous men, who roused his ire by their indefiniteness, and called them "petty bourgeois." Later he extended the concept of "petty bourgeois" far and wide and cast into it all who did not be-

* Marina Tsvetayeva returned to Russia in 1940 after a long exile and committed suicide two years later. She has been posthumously "rehabilitated" recently and her work republished.—Tr.

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long to the new religion: property owners large and small, liberals, conservatives, hooligans, humanists, decadents, Christians, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy. Gorki was a man of *printsipialnost'*; G. Chulkov called him the only truly believing writer of his time. He knew that all that is not God is Devil.

The literary revaluation of the superfluous man and his rapid transformation into a negative figure was intensified in the 1920s, the formative years of the positive hero. When they were placed side by side, it became obvious to everybody that there are no heroes without Purpose, but only heroes who were for or against the Purpose and that the superfluous man was, when all is said and done, a camouflaged enemy, a base traitor who should be unmasked and punished as quickly as possible.

Thus wrote Gorki in *The Life of Klim Samgin,* Fadeyev in *The Debacle,* and many others. In *The Towns and the Years* Fedin purged his heart of the last drop of pity for the superfluous hero, formerly so enchanting. The only dissonant note was perhaps struck by Sholokhov in his *Quiet Flows the Don.* Having shown the tragic fate of that superfluous man, Grigori Melekhov, he bade him an affectionate farewell. Since his hero belonged to the simple people and not the intelligentsia, it was possible to close an eye to Sholokhov's behavior. Today his novel is considered a model of socialist realism. But it is a model that, for obvious reasons, has found no imitators.

Meanwhile, other superfluous men, wishing to save their lives, renounced their past and duly transformed themselves into positive heroes. One of them recently said: "There is nothing in the world more disgusting than fence-sitters . . . Yes, yes, I am a Red. A Red, the devil take you." (Fedin's *An Extraordinary Year,* 1949). The curse was addressed, of course, to the Whites.

Thus did the hero of 19th century Russian perish ingloriously.

III

In its content and spirit, as in its central figure, socialist realism is much closer to the 18th century than to the 19th. Without realizing it, we jump over to the heads of our fathers and revive the tradition of our grandfathers. Like ourselves, the 18th century had the idea of political purposefulness, the feeling of its own superiority and a clear consciousness that "God is with us":

> Hark, hark, O Universe
> To vict'ries beyond human power;
> Listen, O astounded Europe
> To the exploits of these Russians.
> Peoples, know and understand,
> Believe ye that with us is God;
> Believe that, aided by His hand,
> A single Russian can defeat
> All your abysmal evil forces.
> Peoples, know this dread Colossus:
> God is with us, so honor ye the Russian.

These verses of the 18th century poet Derzhavin have a very contemporary ring, though the language would, of course, need modernizing. Like the socialist system, so 18th century Russia conceived of itself as the center of Creation. Inspired by the plenitude of its virtues—"self-created and self-fortified"—it proclaimed itself as an example to all peoples and all eras. Its religious self-conceit was so strong that it did not even admit the possibility of the existence of other norms and ideals. In his *Portrait of Felitsa,* Derzhavin, praising the ideal

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reign of Catherine II, expressed the desire that

> Peoples savage and remote,
> Covered still with wool and scales,
> Dressed only with leaf and bark,
> And adorned with wings of birds,
> Should all gather at Her throne,
> Hear the gentle voice of Law,
> So that tears should run in torrents
> Down their swarthy, sunburned faces.
> They should cry and understand
> The bliss of living in our time,
> Should abandon their equality,
> And all subject be to Her.

Derzhavin simply cannot imagine that these "savages," the Huns, Finns and other peoples that surrounded the Russian throne somewhat in the manner of the Internationale, should reject this flattering offer and not wish to submit at once to Catherine, who is, after all, "celestial grace incarnate." For him, as for our writers, anyone who does not wish to become like the model proposed to him and does not hasten to forget his barbarous "equality" and accept the proferred gift of "bliss" falls into one of two categories. He either is so stupid that he does not understand his own interests, in which case he must be re-educated. Or he lacks virtue and is, to use one of our words, a "reactionary," in which case he must be liquidated. For in our world there is nothing finer than this state, this faith, this life and this Empress. So Derzhavin believed, just as a contemporary poet who celebrates the new reign in Derzhavin's language:

> There is no country like vast Russia,
> No flowers grow as bright as ours,
> Great is our people, free and deathless,
> Our proud, eternal Russian people.
>
> It stemmed attacking hordes of Batu
> And broke all chains that held it down,
> It made Russia and it raised her
> To heights of stars and crests of time.
>
> A. Prokofiev

Eighteenth century literature produced its own positive hero. He is "the friend of common good"; he "strives to surpass all in courage," etc.; i.e. he constantly raises the level of his political morality, possesses all the virtues and tells everybody just what to do. This literature knew nothing of the superfluous man. Neither did it know the destructive laughter that was the chronic disease of Russian culture from Pushkin to Blok and reached its climax among the decadents. "All the most lively and sensitive children of our century are stricken by a disease unknown to doctors and psychiatrists. It is related to the disorders of the soul and might be called 'irony.' Its symptoms are fits of an exhausting laughter which starts with a diabolic mockery and a provocative smile and ends as rebellion and sacrilege." (A. Blok, *Irony,* 1908.)

Seen in this way, irony is the laughter of the superfluous man who devides both himself and everything sacred in this world. "I know men who are ready to choke with laughter when they learn that their mother is dying, that they are starving to death, that their fiancee has betrayed them. Through this accursed irony, everything is the same to them: good and evil, the blue sky and the stinking pit, Dante's Beatrice and Sologub's Untouchable Lady. [Fedor Sologub, a poet of the turn of the 20th century, with decadent tendencies.] Everything is confused, as in a tavern or a fog." (Blok, *ibid.*)

Irony is the faithful companion of unbelief and doubt; it vanishes as soon as there appears a faith that does not tolerate sacrilege. There was no irony

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in Derzhavin, nor in Gorki—except for a few early tales. In Mayakovski there are a few examples, mostly from prerevolutionary times. Mayakovski soon found out what he could and what he could not laugh about. He could not permit himself to laugh at Lenin, whom he praised to the skies, any more than Derzhavin would laugh at his Empress. Pushkin, by contrast, addressed indecent verses even to the chaste and modest Tatiana. Pushkin was the first to taste the bitter joys of self-negation, even though he was gay and had a balanced character. As for Lermontov, he almost seems to have imbibed the poison in his childhood. In Blok himself and in his contemporaries Sologub and Leonid Andreev, destructive laughter became an elemental force sweeping everything before it.

As in the 18th century, we became severe and serious. This does not mean that we forgot how to laugh; but laughter ceased to be indecent and disrespectful; it acquired a Purpose. It eliminates faults, corrects manners, keeps up the brave spirits of youth. It is laughter with a serious face and with a pointing finger: "This is not the way to do things!" It is a laughter free from the acidity of irony.

Irony was replaced by pathos, the emotional element of the positive hero. We ceased to fear high-sounding words and bombastic phrases, we were no longer ashamed to be virtuous. The solemn eloquence of the ode suited us. We became Classicists.

When Derzhavin, in his old age, wrote the ode "To the great boyar and military commander Reshemysl," he gave it a subtitle "or the image of what a great lord should be." The art of socialist realism might be given the same subtitle: it represents the world and man as they should be.

Socialist realism starts from an ideal image to which it adapts the living reality. Our demand "to represent life truthfully in its revolutionary development" is really nothing but a summons to view truth in the light of the ideal, to give an ideal interpretation of reality, to present what should be as what is. For we interpret "revolutionary development" as the inevitable movement towards Communism, towards our ideal, in the light of which we see reality. We represent life as we would like it to be and as it is bound to become, when it bows to the logic of Marxism. This is why socialist realism should really be called "socialist classicism."

Some theoretical books and articles by Soviet writers and critics use the terms "romanticism" and "revolutionary romanticism." Gorki wrote much about the links between romanticism and socialist realism. He longed for "the illusion that exalts" and defended the artist's right to embellish life and to present it as better than it is. These calls did not remain unheeded, though many of Gorki's formulas are now veiled by an embarrassed silence or interpreted pharisaically: it is obviously not easy to admit that what we really need are some pretty lies. No, no, God forbid! We are against illusions and against idealization, we write only the truth and at the same time present life in its revolutionary development... Why should we embellish life? It is quite beautiful as it is, we are not out to embellish it, we just want to show the germs of the future it contains...

EARLY ROMANTICISM

All this talk is merely our usual literary politics. In reality—as Gorki knew—romanticism suited our tastes only too well. It gravitates towards the

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ideal, makes our wishes pass for the truth, likes pretty knick-knacks, is not afraid of bombast. This is why it had its well-known success among us. Yet romanticism has played a less important part in our art than might have been expected. It made its presence felt mostly in the prehistory and initial period of socialist realism. In its mature period—the last 20, 30 years—socialist realism has had a comparatively slight romantic tinge.

Romanticism is intimately connected with the *Sturm und Drang* period of Soviet literature, the first five years after 1917, when life and art were flooded with sentiment, when the blazing elan towards a happy future and the world-wide significance of the revolution were not yet regimented by a strict political order. Romanticism is our past, our youth for which we long. It is the ecstasy of swollen banners, the explosions of passion and rage, the rattling of sabers and the neighing of horses, the shootings without judgment and without consequences, the "On to Warsaw!", the life, sleep and death under the naked sky lit by the fires of regiments as nomadic as the Tartars of old:

> Youth that led us
> To the march of sabers,
> Youth that threw us
> On the ice of Kronstadt.
>
> Battle horses
> Carried us off,
> On city squares
> They massacred us.
>
> E. Bagritski

These are not just the sentiments of revolutionists who have survived and grown fat. The memory of the revolution is as sacred, both to those who took part in it and those who were born after it, as the image of a dead mother. It is easier for us to grant that everything that happened after the Revolution was its betrayal than to insult its memory by reproaches and suspicions. Unlike the party, the state, the Ministry of State Security, collectivization, Stalin, etc., the Revolution needs no justification by the Communist paradise that awaits us. It is self-justified and justified emotionally, like love or inspiration. And even though the Revolution was carried out in the name of Communism, its name does not sound less sweet to us for that. Maybe even sweeter . . .

We live between past and future, between the Revolution and Communism. And if Communism promising us golden mountains and representing the inevitable logical outcome of all human history imperiously pulls us forward, the past too pushes us in the back. For it is we who accomplished the Revolution. How then can we blame it or blaspheme against it? We are caught in this psychological squeeze. In itself, we may like it or not. But both before us and behind us stand temples so splendid that we could not bear to attack them. And when we remember that, should our enemies win, they would make us return to the prerevolutionary mode of life (or incorporate us in Western democracy, it hardly matters), then, I am sure, we will start once more from where we started. We will start from the Revolution.

While working on this article I have caught myself more than once dropping into irony—that unworthy device! I caught myself trying to avoid the phrase "Soviet power." I preferred to use its synonyms, like "our state," "the socialist system" and so on. No doubt this was due to the fact that when I was young, the words of one of our Civil War songs went straight to my soul:

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All of us into the fight
For Soviet power
And as one man we'll die
Fighting for it.

It is enough for me to pronounce the words "Soviet power" to make me see the Revolution with my mind's eye. I see the taking of the Winter Palace, the cracking motion of machine-gun belts, the bread cards for one eighth of a pound, the defense of Red Petersburg. In a strictly logical judgment, "Soviet power" and "the socialist state" are the same thing. But if I have a few things against the socialist state—trifles, all of them—I have absolutely nothing against the Soviet power. Ridiculous? Maybe. But this is also romanticism.

Yes, we are all romantic with regard to our past. But the further away we are from our past and the closer we come to Communism, the weaker becomes the romantic halo that art has bestowed upon the Revolution. This is understandable: romanticism is, indeed, part of our nature; but it is not all of it. Sometimes it even violates our nature.

Romanticism is too anarchical and too emotional, while we are becoming ever more disciplined rationalists. It is at the mercy of turbulent feelings and diffuse moods, forgetting logic, common sense and law. "The folly of the brave is the wisdom of life," the young Gorki assured us. This advice was timely when the Revolution was made: fools were necessary then. But can we call the Five Year Plan "folly of the brave"? Or the guidance of the Party? Or, indeed, Communism itself, inevitably prepared by the logical course of history? Here every point is thought through, rationally foreseen and subdivided into corresponding paragraphs. What folly is this? Hm, comrade Gorki, you obviously haven't read your Marx!

Romanticism is powerless to express our clarity and precision. Composed gestures and even moderately solemn speech are foreign to it. It waves its arms, gets excited and dreams distant dreams of the time when Communism is all but built and will be seen any moment.

In affirming an ideal, romanticism is not binding enough. It takes the wish for the reality. This is not bad in itself, but it smells of subjectivism and lack of self-restraint. The wish is the reality, because it must be. Our life is beautiful not only because we want it to be beautiful but also because it must be so: it has no choice.

All these arguments, mostly voiceless and unconscious, gradually dried up the hot current of romanticism. The river of art was covered with the ice of classicism. As art became more precise, rational and teleological, it squeezed out romanticism.

THE SHIFT TO CLASSICISM

The cold breath and ponderous heaviness of classicism was felt by us long ago, but few men dared to be outspoken on this subject. "The spirit of classicism blows upon us from all directions. All breathe it; but they either cannot distinguish it or don't know its name or simply are afraid to speak about it." (A. Efros, *The Messenger on the Doorstep,* 1922.)

The most daring of all was N. Punin, a fine art critic. At that time he was connected with futurism; he is completely forgotten now. Already in 1918 he noted "the marked classicism of Mayakovski's verses." He declared that in his *Mystery Bouffe*—his first major post-revolutionary work—Mayakovski "ceased to be a romanticist and became a classicist." He forecast that "much as he would like to, Mayakovski will never again rebel as impetu-

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ously as he did in the past."

Although his forecast proved remarkably correct—and not only as regards Mayakovski—the term "classicism" did not take hold in a Soviet literature that kept becoming more clearly classicist. It was, perhaps, too embarrassingly frank. Also, it recalled certain undesirable associations that seemed to lower our dignity. We preferred to call ourselves modestly "socialist realists" and hide our name under this pseudonym . . .

Beginning with the 1930s, the passion for solemnity finally imposes itself and a pompous simplicity of style, the hallmark of classicism, becomes fashionable. We call our state "the Power"; the mujik—"cultivator of the bread"; the rifle-"saber." We capitalize a great number of words. Allegorical figures and personified abstractions invade our literature, and we speak with slow solemnity and grandiose gestures.

> Yes, we believe, we must believe
> That truth exists—this is our stand;
> And that the good is not defenseless
> And conquers evil in the end.
>
> A. TVARDOVSKI

> The time has come! In vain with cruel fate
> The Fascist Lord has Moscow threatened long.
> But to victorious Moscow fell Berlin.
>
> M. ISAKOVSKI

The first heroes of Soviet literature stormed the fortresses of capitalism with torn bast shoes on their feet and sexual oaths on their lips. They were coarse and unrestrained: "Vanka! Put some paper rubles in your shoes! You can't scoot barefoot to the meetting!" (Mayakovski). But now they acquired good looks, elegant clothes and refined manners. If they are sometimes lacking in taste, this is the national and social trait of our classicism, born as it was of Russian democracy. But neither the heroes nor their authors ever suspect that they are in bad taste. They try with all their power to be beautiful, polite and cultured. They present every detail "correctly" and "in the best of tastes."

"Under the white ceiling sparkled an elegant chandelier, fringed with transparent glass pendants, as with icicles . . . Tall silvery columns supported a blindingly white cupola, decorated with necklaces of electric bulbs."

What is this? A Tsar's palace? No, an ordinary club in a provincial town.

"On the stage, by the polished wing of the grand piano stood Rakitin, dressed in sober gray. Like a blue river, a necktie flowed down his breast."

A singer? A fashionable tenor? No, a simple party worker.

And now let's look at the people. It does not curse, it does not fight, it does not drink itself senseless the way the Russian people used to do. And if takes a drink at a wedding table covered with exquisite foods, it is only as an accompaniment of toasts:

> "Terentii raised his eyes, looked at the round of guests, rumblingly coughed into his fist, caressed the silver flow of his beard with a trembling hand, and said:
>
> 'First of all let us congratulate the young couple, may they be happy and embellish the earth by their presence.'
>
> The guests followed him with their toasts, among the melodious clinking of the wine glasses:
>
> 'May they honor their parents!'
> 'May they have healthy children!'
> 'And not injure the glory of the kolkhoz!' "

The quotations are taken from the novel *From the Whole Heart* by E. Maltsev, published in 1949. It is like

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dozens and hundreds of other novels. It is a sample of classicist prose of average literary quality. The style has long become a commonplace of our literature, and passes from author to author without undergoing any substantial change.

Every style has its distinctive quality. But classicism is more prone than other styles to impose its mark, to observe pedantically definite canons and norms, to be conservative as to form. It is among the most stable of styles. It brings and accepts new elements mostly in its formative period, but later tries to follow established models faithfully and is hostile to researches in form, experimentalism and originality. This is why it rejected the talents of many poets who wanted to embrace it but retain their personality: V. Khlebnikov, O. Mandelshtam and N. Zabolotski among them.* Even Mayakovski, whom Stalin called "the most talented poet of our Soviet era," remained in it a tragically solitary figure.

Mayakovski was too much of a revolutionary to become a traditionalist. To this day he is accepted politically rather than poetically. For all the peans written to his glory, his rhythms, images and language seem overbold to most of our poets. Those who want to follow in his footsteps copy his mannerisms but are unable to grasp what is essential in him—his boldness, inventiveness and passion. They imitate his verses but don't follow his example . . .

Geniuses, of course, are not born every day, and the state of art rarely seems satisfactory to contemporaries. Still I must sadly confess, with other of my contemporaries, that our literature has become progressively impoverished in the last two or three decades. Fedin, Fadeev, Ehrenburg, Ivanov and many others have written worse and worse with the years. The twenties, of which Mayakovski wrote that "Only poets, alas, we have none," now seem to be the years in which poetry flourished. Since the writers accepted socialist realism en masse—the beginning of the thirties—literature has gone down and down. Some few glimmers of light during the Patriotic War did not save it.

In this contradiction between the victory of socialist realism and the low quality of literary production, many are inclined to blame socialist realism. They say that great art cannot be written under it and even that it is the death of all art. But Mayakovski provides a refutation, to start with. For all the originality of his talents he remained an orthodox Soviet writer, perhaps the most orthodox Soviet writer—and this did not stop him from writing good poetry. He was an exception to general rules, but mostly because he observed these rules more strictly than others. In his poetic practice he carried out the demands of socialist realism more radically and more consistently. For the contradiction between socialist realism and literary quality, the blame must fall on literature, i.e. on the writers who accepted the rules of socialist realism but did not have sufficient artistic consistency to embody them in deathless images. Mayakovski had that consistency.

Art is not afraid of dictatorship, severity, repressions, or even conservatism and clichés. When necessary, art can be narrowly religious, dumbly

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* A. F. Khlebnikov, who died in 1922, was one of the founders of Russian futurism; Mandelshtam, who rebelled against the symbolists, died after deportation; Zabolotski is among the most talented Soviets poets today.—Tr.

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governmental, devoid of individuality —and yet good. We go into esthetic raptures over the stereotypes of Egyptian art, Russian icons and folklore. Art is elastic enough to fit into any bed of Procrustes that history presents to it. But there is one thing it cannot stand: eclecticism.

Our misfortune is that we are convinced socialist realists but not convinced enough. Submitting to its cruel rules, we are yet afraid to follow to the end the road that we ourselves have chosen. No doubt, if we were less educated, it would be easier for us to attain the integrity that is indispensable to a writer. But we went to school, read all kinds of books, and learned only too well that there were great writers before us—Balzac, Maupassant, Tolstoy and, yes, what's his name?—Chekhov. This is what has undone us. We wanted to become famous and to write like Chekhov. This unnatural liaison produced monsters.

It is impossible, without falling into parody, to produce a positive hero in the style of full socialist realism and yet make him into a psychological portrait. In this way, we will get neither psychology nor hero. Mayakovski knew this and, hating psychological analysis and details, wrote in proportions that were larger than life. He wrote coarsely, poster-style, homerically. He avoided like a plague descriptions of common life and rural nature. He broke with "the great traditions of the great Russian literature" and, though he loved Pushkin and Chekhov, he did not try to imitate them. All this helped Mayakovski to lift himself to the level of his epoch and to express its spirit fully and clearly, without alien admixtures.

But the writing of so many other writers is in a critical state right now precisely because, in spite of the classicistic nature of our art, they still consider it realism. They do it because they base their judgments on the literary criticism of the 19th century, which is farthest away from us and most foreign to us. Instead of following the road of conventional forms, pure fantasy and imagination which the great religious cultures always took, they try to compromise. They lie, they maneuver and they try to combine the uncombinable: the positive hero, who logically tends towards the pattern, the allegory—and the psychological analysis of character; elevated style, declamation—and prosaic descriptions of ordinary life; a high ideal—and truthful representation of life.

The result is a loathsome literary salad. The characters torment themselves not quite like Dostoevsky's, are mournful not quite like Chekhov's, found their happy families not quite like Tolstoy's, and, suddenly becoming aware of the time they are living in, scream at the reader the copybook slogans which they read in Soviet newspapers, like "Long live world peace!" or "Down with the Warmongers!" This is neither classicism nor realism. It is a half-classicist half-art, which is none too socialist and altogether not realism.

THE CONTRADICTION

It seems that the very term "socialist realism" contains an insoluble contradiction. A socialist, i.e. a purposeful, a religious art cannot be produced with the literary method of the 19th century called "realism." And a really faithful representation of life cannot be achieved in a language based on teleological concepts. If socialist realism really wants to rise to the level of the great world cultures and produce its *Communiad,* there is

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only one way to do it. It must give up the "realism," renounce the sorry and fruitless attempts to write a socialist *Anna Karenina* or a socialist *Cherry Orchard*. When it abandons its effort to achieve verisimilitude, it will be able to express the grand and implausible sense of our era.

Unfortunately, this is unlikely to happen. The events of the last few years are dragging our art on a road of half-measures and half-truths. The death of Stalin inflicted an irreparable loss upon our religiously esthetic system; it cannot be resuscitated through the now revived cult of Lenin. Lenin is too much like an ordinary man and his image is too realistic: small, bald, dressed in civilian clothes. Stalin seemed to be specially made for the hyperbole that awaited him: mysterious, omniscient, all-powerful, he was the living monument of our era and needed only one quality to become God—immortality.

Ah, if only we had been intelligent enough to surround his death with miracles! We could have announced on the radio that he did not die but had risen to Heaven, from where he continued to watch us, in silence, no words emerging from beneath the mystic moustache. His relics would have cured men struck by paralysis or possessed by demons. And children, before going to bed, would have kneeled by the window and addressed their prayers to the cold and shining stars of the Celestial Kremlin.

But we did not listen to the voice of our conscience. Instead of intoning devout prayers, we set about dethroning the "cult of personality" that we ourselves had created. We thus blew up the foundations of that classicist colossus which, if we had waited but a little, would have joined the Pyramid of Cheops and the Apollo of Belvedere in the treasury of world art.

The strength of a theological system resides in its constancy, harmony and order. Once we admit that God carelessly sinned with Eve and, becoming jealous of Adam, sent him off to labor at land reclamation, the whole concept of the Creation falls apart, and it is impossible to restore the faith.

After the death of Stalin we entered upon a period of destruction and re-evaluation. It is a slow and inconsistent process, it lacks perspectives, and the inertia of both past and future lie heavy on it. Today's children will scarcely be able to produce a new God, capable of inspiring humanity into the next historical cycle. Maybe He will have to be supplemented by other stakes of the Inquisition, by further "personality cults" and by new terrestrial labors, so that after many centuries a new Purpose will rise above the world. But today no one yet knows its name.

And meanwhile our art is marking time between an insufficient realism and an insufficient classicism. After the loss it suffered it is no longer able to fly towards the ideal and to sing the praises of our life in a sincere and high-flown style, presenting what should be as what is. In our works of glorification resound ever more openly the notes of baseness and hypocrisy. The most successful writers are those who can present our achievements as truthfully as possible and our failings as tactfully, delicately and untruthfully as possible. This is what happened with Dudintsev's novel *Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone*, which stirred up a lot of noise and was publicly anathemized for blackening our bright socialist reality.

But is the dream of the old, good and honest "realism" the only heresy

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to which Russian literature is susceptible? Is it possible that all the lessons that we received were taught in vain and that, in the best of cases, all we wish is to return to the naturalist school and the critical tendency? Let us hope that this is not so and that our need for truth will not interfere with the work of thought and imagination.

Right now I put my hope in a phantasmagoric art, with hypotheses instead of a Purpose, an art in which the grotesque will replace realistic descriptions of ordinary life. Such an art corresponds best to the spirit of our time. May the fantastic imagery of Hoffmann and Dostoevsky, of Goya, Chagall, and Mayakovski (the most socialist realist of all) and of many other realists and non-realists teach us how to be truthful with the aid of the absurd and the fantastic.

Having lost our faith, we have not lost our enthusiasm about the metamorphoses of God that take place before our very eyes, the miraculous transformations of His entrails and His cerebral convolutions. We don't know where to go; but, realizing that there is nothing to be done about it, we start to think, to set riddles, to make assumptions. We may thus invent something marvelous? Perhaps; but it will no longer be socialist realism.

(*Translated from the Russian by* GEORGE DENNIS)

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A Program for the Nation

Norman Mailer

Last August I received a letter from Esquire magazine. Its first two paragraphs read:

> Looking ahead to the 1960 presidential election, this magazine feels that it would be an interesting and useful undertaking to present the opinions of outstanding men of ideas regarding the candidates proposed and the issues involved. For the political parties and the electorate, there is the decision of which candidate, among the several already prominent, is to be given presidential authority and responsibility. Yet, during the campaign there may be such concentration on the personalities of the candidates that issues to be debated and decided become neglected. We believe that the publication of the opinions of leaders in fields other than politics will be a contribution to intelligent public discussion.
>
> Accordingly, we should be grateful if you will consider, and answer, these two questions:
>
> 1. Among those mentioned as possible presidential candidates, whom do you prefer for president in 1960?
> 2. What, to your mind, should be the most important issues in the election?
>
> Attached is a list of those who, like yourself, are being asked to participate. There has been a fair attempt to select persons whose individual opinions are valued within their fields, and whose collective opinions will present a wide spectrum of response.

I went no further with the letter, but took a look at who had been invited. There were 150 names. About ten of us in the literary garden, and a wide range of other minds, frauds, generals, stuffed shirts, bureaucrats, after-dinner speakers, and figures in the news: Bernard Baruch, Dr. Ralph Bunche, Gen. Lucius Clay, Henry Ford II., Gen. James M. Gavin, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Ernest Hemingway, Dr. Sidney Hook, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Henry R. Luce, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, George Meany, Edward R. Murrow, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, Walter Reuther, Rear Adm. Hyman G. Rickover, Dr. Jonas Salk, Gen. David Sarnoff, Francis Cardinal Spellman, Dr. Frank Stan-

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ton, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, Dr. Wernher von Braun, DeWitt Wallace, Hon. John Hay Whitney.

Over breakfast, I decided the hell with it, I was not going to answer, and went through the rest of the day without thinking any more about the letter. Late that night, after a party, I tried to go to sleep half-drunk, and instead found myself awake with that particular intense and false clarity alcohol can give in the last thirty minutes before it starts to wear away. I was thinking about the letter from Esquire, *and at three in the morning it seemed right to answer it. So I went downstairs, and worked at fever speed for an hour or less, not altogether innocent of manic glee at the thought of how this long answer to question 2 would look in the pages of a mass-media magazine. The draft written, I went to bed and enjoyed a self-satisfied sleep.*

In the morning I thought to take another look at the letter from Esquire. *In its third paragraph was the following sentence:*

> Answers to Question 2 will be collated, with a discussion of the issues cited by the author of the article, Walter Friedenberg, a scholar-journalist and Fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs.

As an afterthought, the letter remarked:

> *Esquire* holds no political position and will advance none.

So I did not mail in my suggestions; it occurred to me they might roil the processes of collation.

What follows is the first draft as I wrote it, touched here and cut there to make it a little less unreadable.

•

I think I would be in favor of legislation whose inner tendency would be to weaken the bonds of legislation. As examples:

1. I would like to see a law passed which would abolish capital punishment, except for those states which insisted on keeping it. Such states would then be allowed to kill criminals provided that the killing is not impersonal but personal and a public spectacle: to wit that the executioner be more or less the same size and weight as the criminal (the law could here specify the limits) and that they fight to death using no weapons, or weapons not capable of killing at a distance. Thus, knives or broken bottles would be acceptable. Guns would not.

The benefit of this law is that it might return us to moral responsibility. The killer would carry the other man's death in his psyche. The audience, in turn, would experience a sense of tragedy, since the executioners, highly trained for this, would almost always win. In the flabby American spirit there is a buried sadist who finds the bullfight contemptible—what he really desires are gladiators. Since nothing is worse for a country than repressed sadism, this method of execution

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would offer ventilation for the more cancerous emotions of the American public.

2. Cancer is going to become the first political problem of America in twenty years. The man who finds a cure could run successfully for President. But I doubt if a cure will be found until all serious cancer researchers, and most especially the heads of department are put under sentence of mortal combat (with a professional executioner) if they have failed to make progress in their part of the program after two years. This would keep committeemen out of the project—it would also help in the search for a cure, since one may suspect that only a brave man living in the illumination of approaching death could brood sufficiently over the nature of disease to come up with a cure which was not worse than the illness. (Cancer may well have proliferated because the medical minds pound out cures for other diseases which so violate the inner rhythms of the body that one's potential for cancer is increased—as for example the hoggish therapy of illness by antibiotics whose after-effects and psychic effects are still unknown.)

3. Pass a bill making legal the sale of drugs. I happen to think that people who take drugs burn up the best part of their minds and gut their sex, but the same is true for those who drink too much, and alcohol is in a favored legal position because the liquor industries are so rich. While it would not necessarily be attractive to see a larger proportion of people destroy themselves with drugs, it must be recognized that the right to destroy oneself is also one of the inalienable rights, because others cannot know the reason for the self-destruction. It is possible that many people take heroin because they sense unconsciously that if they did not, they would be likely to commit murder, get cancer, or turn homosexual.

4. Since the Russians seem to have more vigor than we do at the moment, I would make every effort to pass them our diseases. I would encourage the long-term loan to them of countless committees of the best minds we have on Madison Ave. If our hucksters have been able in fifteen years to leech from us the best blood of the American spirit, they should be able to debilitate the Russians equally in an equivalent period; if not, my admiration for the soporific power of Madison Ave. is misplaced.

5. I would pass a bill abolishing all forms of censorship. Censorship is an insult to democracy because it makes men unequal—it assumes that some have more sexual wisdom than others, and it imprisons everyone in excessive guilt. Besides, pornography is debilitating to sex—the majority of people would stay away from it once they discovered how wan it left them. Given the force of the hangover, most

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people do not get drunk every night, and the same, I believe, would apply here. It is possible I am indulging a shallow liberal optimism, and America would become a cesspool of all-night pornographic drive-in movies, the majority of the population becoming night people who meet for cocktails at one in the morning. But this could also serve as the salvation of the Republic, for America would then become so wicked a land that Russia would never dare to occupy us, nor even to exterminate us by the atom bomb, their scientists having by then discovered that people who are atomized disseminate their spirit into the conqueror.

DISSENT *announces the granting of 1959 Longview Literary Awards for the following:*

"Reflections on Little Rock" by Hannah Arendt—Winter 1959

General contributions by Irving Howe

To stimulate American literature, awards of $300 each are made annually for outstanding work in poetry, fiction, and essays appearing in publications which cannot pay for contributions or which pay inadequately.

The aim of the awards is to bring up the compensation for good writing to the professional level regardless of where it is published—and thus to aid in relieving authors of the pressure to relax their standards or submit to extra-literary requirements in order to be paid for their work.

The field of "little" magazines and collections is surveyed by a panel of well-known writers, and award winners are chosen on the basis of the merit of their contributions.

The panel selecting the award winners consited of Saul Bellow, Louise Bogan, Charles Boni, Alfred Kazin, Thomas B. Hess, and Henri Peyre.

A DISSENT contribution receiving a Literary Award for 1958 was:

"Reflections on Literature as a Minor Art" by Paul Goodman—Summer 1958

A feature of Longview's Literary Awards Program, as of its Arts Purchase Program, is that no applications are received and that there are no forms to fill out. *Unpublished manuscripts are not considered, but all literary periodicals are surveyed.*

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ALEXANDER HERZEN—ANCESTOR IN DEFEAT

George Woodcock

"The whole bourgeois world blown up by gunpowder, when the smoke disperses and reveals the ruins, will start again with different variations—*another bourgeois world.*" It was these words of Alexander Herzen that occurred to me when I recently finished reading Ilya Ehrenburg's *The Thaw,* that tenth-rate echo of Arnold Bennett. In Ehrenburg's petty world of essentially middle-class relationships, of intrigues and ambitions and half-hearted rebellions hardly distinguishable from those of Levittown and Tooting, Herzen would certainly have detected the new bourgeois world which he prophesied as the result of a revolution misconceived and misapplied; he would have seen here, as he saw in Western Europe during the mid-nineteenth century, facile materialism spreading like "a syphilitic growth infecting the blood and bone of society."

My first impulse, on comparing the shallow and timid perception which Ehrenburg directed upon his environment with the penetrating irony that characterized Herzen's criticisms of the nineteenth-century world, was to draw the comparison between the vigor of the generation of Russian intellectuals that arose in defiance of Nicholas I, and the melancholy flutters of quasi-independence on the part of present-day Russian writers, to which western liberals are inclined to attach such exaggerated importance. The comparison is instructive, but it merely deepens what we already know in general terms: that the autocrats of the nineteenth century were not so acutely conscious as modern totalitarians of the need to prevent the emergence of any kind of genuine intellectual liberty. The climate of free thought in the Russian universities that bred Herzen and Belinsky and Bakunin has long been extinct, and even if in some way a critical mentality like theirs were to emerge it would find no vehicle of expression in the controlled Russian press. Ehrenburg is tolerated precisely because his meager shows of rebellion are harmless to the existing regime and have their uses as external propaganda.

But having realized that a direct comparison between Ehrenburg and any nineteenth century Russian writer was perhaps superfluous, I was brought back to the ironic figure of Herzen himself, that ancestor in disillusioned radicalism, and to the realization that, as a critic of revolutionary attitudes and as an observer of the nineteenth century world,

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Herzen has an interest for us today which could hardly be brought out by a routine comparison with a contemporary Stalinist hack. And so this essay has become rather a re-examination of Herzen in his own right, with the original point of comparison fading into an initial and discarded excuse.

I

Herzen is perhaps best known in the English-speaking world through E. H. Carr's study of him and his circle, *The Romantic Exiles;* and Carr's thesis that Herzen was primarily a romantic among romantics has colored most recent judgments of him. It presents, however, an incomplete and distorted view of a complex and often contradictory personality.

Like his literary contemporaries, Herzen was at first influenced by the Romantic movement which flowered belatedly in Russia during the 1830's. In some aspects of his life and thought, in the curiously morbid sentimentality that ruled his personal relationships, in the quasi-mystical elements that sometimes emerged in his political attitudes, the influence was enduring. His attachment to France before 1848 was romantic and unrealistic, and after 1848 this attachment was transferred to Russia, so that, throughout the most active part of his career, Herzen's outlook on his homeland was consistently ambivalent, combining with hatred of autocracy a strong feeling that Russia had regenerative powers that might yet give it a positive role in European affairs.

But even in his youth elements of resistance to this influence were present; his father had been a Voltairean, and Herzen inherited his eighteenth century intellectual irony. When most of his friends, following the romantic trend, became enamoured of German philosophy, he avoided that crepuscular labyrinth, and turned instead to the clearer thought of France, of socialists like Saint-Simon and Fourier, whose extravagances he rejected, but whose essential insights he took as a basis for his own social views. While his friend Bakunin, an unregenerate romantic to the end, went through a period of fanatical Hegelianism, Herzen realized fully the ambiguities of the German philosopher's dialectic; faced with the celebrated phrase, "Whatever is real is rational," he objected, early in the 1840's: "But once any existing social order is justified by reason, so can the struggle against that order, if the struggle *exists,* be equally justified."

He was a romantic in whom the antibodies of intellectual scepticism grew steadily stronger, until, on most questions, he developed an ironic detachment such as was attained by few of his contemporaries. He liked to compare himself with Byron, and the comparison is not inapt, for in both of these radical aristocrats one sees the romantic and the Voltairean passions in perpetual conflict, the emotional vision being constantly undermined by eroding doubt, yet never completely disintegrating. It was this sustained duality within Herzen's outlook that

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made him that rare bird indeed, the radical who is always disillusioned and yet who is renewed by a recurrent hope that makes action seem ever important, even in a cause that the sceptical self regards with pessimism.

For Herzen, as for his friend Proudhon and for many other radicals of the mid-nineteenth century, 1848 was the Great Divide, the line that marked off the relatively facile optimism of youth from the conflict between idealism and despair that dominated the years of maturity. But in Herzen's early life there had already been another catastrophic event of almost traumatic intensity: the revolt of the Russian officers in December, 1825, and its ferociously brutal suppression by Nicholas I. Herzen was then a boy of thirteen, and he tells in his memoirs—*My Past and Thoughts*—how he and his friend Ogarev went into the Sparrow Hills outside Moscow and there swore that they would devote their lives to fulfilling the ideals of the Decembrists. Both of them kept their oaths to the best of their ability, and Herzen's radical ideas undoubtedly took their original form from the Decembrist programs. In particular, he was indebted to Pavel Ivanovich Pestel. Pestel, who was executed in 1826 at the age of 33, demanded the emancipation of and the granting of land to the serfs, a progressive agricultural program, universal manhood suffrage and a democratic republic. All these demands were later developed by Herzen, and the only major point on which he seems to have disagreed with Pestel is to be found in his rejection of the latter's desire that the state be centralized; Herzen, though never an anarchist in any doctrinaire sense, distrusted the State (this was part of a natural reaction against the elaborate bureaucracy set up by Nicholas I) and advocated a thorough policy of administrative decentralization.

Herzen's Decembrism, reinforced by French socialist ideas, led him into the circles of student discussion which sprang up in the universities during the 1830's; as a result of the vaguely liberal ideas which he propounded, he was banished in 1835 to the Urals, whence, in Byronic spirit, he emerged secretly to marry his cousin and whisk her off to his place of exile. A few years later he returned to Moscow, but a mild criticism of the inefficiency of the Tsarist police in preventing murders was enough to bring him a second term of exile, this time in Novgorod. It is from the time of this last experience that the characteristic tone of bitterness, the tendency towards habitual disillusionment, became evident in Herzen's attitude. Seeing no chance of any improvement in Russia while Nicholas I was still Autocrat, Herzen resolved to leave the country as soon as he could; the death of his father, a wealthy landowner, gave him the means to travel, and in 1847 he crossed the frontier into the western Europe.

From this time onward Herzen was to remain an exile, never establishing a permanent home or becoming assimilated into any of the countries that gave him passing hospitality. After 1848, he knew that

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he was never likely to return to Russia, yet he did not attempt in any real way to sever the emotional links that tied him to his past in that country. Even the pattern of his daily life remained in many respects, despite his acceptance of the title of socialist, that of a Russian feudal landowner. He arrived in Europe with two carriages full of relatives and retainers, and, wherever he lived, he maintained the lavish feudal manner, surrounding himself with dependents, handing out largesse to those exiles who were less fortunate than himself, and not only financing his own periodicals, but also playing patron to that of Proudhon, *La Voix du Peuple*. Ironically, all this was made possible by the intervention of the financier Rothschild, who forced the Tsarist authorities to liberate Herzen's funds within Russia by threatening to sabotage a frontier into Western Europe.

II

In his more general attitudes, too, Herzen remained the Russian and the aristocrat. His love of Western Europe was a short-lived phenomenon which did not survive the storms of reality. In 1847, he entered Paris "with reverence, as men used to enter Jerusalem and Rome." But the ineptitudes of most of the revolutionaries in 1848 and the horror of the repression that followed the June insurrection of that year precipitated a reaction of feelings. Herzen began to see the west as degenerate and without hope of revival from within, and he found in the materialism of the bourgeoisie—who in 1848 turned from revolutionism to reaction—a reason for this degeneracy. He came to hate the middle class of Western Europe with a detestation that never waned, and, though his sympathies were aroused by the French workers who fought behind the June barricades and by such individualistic radicals as Proudhon and Orsini, he did not feel that they had the power to halt the decline of the West. More and more he began to turn towards Russia, the land which had not undergone the corrupting process of mercantilism and industrialism, the land where the peasants were still a vast inarticulate potential force.

In this he established a pattern that was followed by all the Russian aristocratic revolutionaries—Bakunin, Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Lavrov, Cherkesov, and so on. All of them retained and incorporated into their political philosophies the contempt for the shopkeeper which is shared by most aristocrats, and all of them showed the former landowner's tendency to see virtue in the country and the former proprietor's guilty inclination to elevate the peasant above the town classes of bourgeois and proletariat. But the aristocratic revolutionary cannot entirely be dismissed in negative terms of this kind. For, in general, it was these former noblemen, with their more liberal educations, who were the least liable of the nineteenth-century radicals to become bogged down in parochial and doctrinaire political attitudes, and at the same time the most open to fresh and invigorating ideas.

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It was the feeling, after 1848, of the bankruptcy of the west that led Herzen to concentrate more and more of his energy on the task of initiating propaganda in Russia, and in this rôle he became the great pioneer of all the Russian liberal and radical movements of the later nineteenth century. It was typical of his situation as an exiled nobleman that his first attempts in this direction, involving the printing and the despatch by secret means to Russia of one or two pamphlets criticizing the Tsarist regime, should have arisen as much out of the bored need for action of a leisured and moneyed expatriate as it did from any hope that his actions would bear fruit. The foundation of the Free Russian Press was indeed very largely a sentimental gesture in the direction of his ancient ideals, of his oath to the Decembrists, and nobody was more delightedly astonished than he when the first fugitive publications of the press aroused great attention in Russia. Herzen had in fact initiated something totally new in Russian history—the publication of direct criticisms of the Tsar, and to those who read them in the fear-ridden atmosphere of Nicholas's Russia his writings seemed audacious and stimulating in the extreme. On the strength of these slight publications Herzen not only became recognized by the liberals within Russia as a kind of intellectual mentor—a position which he held for more than a decade while he published his expatriate periodicals, *The Northern Star* and *The Bell*—but also assumed, as if by acknowledged right, the position of unofficial ambassador in Western Europe of the dissident forces within Russia. Once, at least, this last fact had a consequence that appears more ironical to us than it can have done to anybody in Herzen's day. A mass gathering was held in London in February, 1855, to commemorate the revolutions of 1848; Victor Hugo, Arnold Ruge, Kossuth and Mazzini represented their own countries, and Herzen was chosen as the Russian speaker, upon which Marx, who had also been invited, refused to have anything to do with the meeting. "I will nowhere and at no time appear on the same platform as Herzen," he explained to Engels, "since I am not of the opinion that 'old Europe' can be rejuvenated by Russian blood."

Herzen's rôle in preparing the end of Tsarism in Russia belongs to history; he showed the Russians that it was possible to criticize the regime, but, once they had learned this from him, the radical groups which sprang up during the 1860s soon abandoned the gradualism that underlay his policy and the limited program of reforms with which he expressed it in *The Bell*. Towards the terrorism of the Narodnaya Volya, towards violent anarchism, towards Marxism, the young generation rapidly moved away from Herzen, and, except in a general way as an innovator who started the wave of intellectual rebellion in the 1850's, he did not have a great direct influence on his successors. Bakunin, Pisarev, Chernyshevsky, even Nechaev, all contributed more to the tactics and programs of later movements than Herzen did. Indeed, in some respects he was actually nearer to the liberal wing of the Slavophils,

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with their rejection of autocracy and their sense of the destiny of Russia, than to any of the wide array of revolutionary groups that took part in the first Russian revolution of 1905.

This fact needs to be stressed in view of the Communist attempts to claim Herzen as an ancestor. Herzen, in fact, was in no way a proto-Communist; once, it is true, he published under the aegis of the Free Russian Press a translation of *The Communist Manifesto* (ironically, this first Russian version was the work of Bakunin!), but he did so in the spirit of making available to Russians the most interesting publications of contemporary radicalism, and his own view is expressed more exactly in his remark that "Communism is Russian autocracy turned upside down." Lenin, in his anxiety to prepare a family tree for the Bolshevik regime, went to the extent of claiming that Herzen was "the first to raise the standard of battle by turning to the masses with the free Russian word," and other writers have seen in Herzen the precursor of the Narodniks, with their creed of "going to the people." But Herzen never even attempted to produce a propaganda that would reach the Russian peasants (the only "masses" that existed in his time), and his writings and the publications which he sent into Russia were all calculated to appeal to the intelligentsia and to the liberal minority in the official class and among the aristocracy. Again, while he anticipated the Narodniks in their theory of a society based on a modification of the primitive peasant commune, he did not evolve any plan of direct work among the peasants comparable to the movement which led the Narodnik intellectuals to leave the cities and work in the villages in the hope of turning the peasants into the vanguard of the revolution.

III

Essentially, Herzen was neither a propagandist nor a conspiratorial organizer (1848 cured him of that), but a revolutionary intellectual, and it is for this reason, more than any other, that, while the Narodnik movement and its tacticians have been rendered obsolete by events, Herzen is still interesting to us today. His ideas have been somewhat obscured by his record as a publicist and by that romantic element in his personal life which so appealed to Professor Carr, but when one comes to consider them, they still have a provocative relevance both to Russian problems and also to certain perennial problems of socialism. The emphases change, the degrees of enthusiasm vary, but the essential attitudes remain.

Herzen was always a socialist, but in the Proudhonian sense, rejecting governmental socialism in favor of a conception based on modifications of the peasant *mir* and the cooperative *artel* of workmen. He remained always anti-bourgeois, and he looked with distrust on western forms of democracy which, like de Tocqueville, he feared might end in the universal reign of mediocrity. He rejected industrialism as he saw it developing in England and other western countries, but he

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did not reject the idea of applying science to production, provided this application were based on "the relation of man to the soil," which he regarded as "a primordial fact, a *natural* fact." He believed that socialism could only be justified if it enriched rather than impoverished life, and for this reason he rejected its more ascetic forms. "We can make of our world neither a Sparta nor a Benedictine convent," he said. "The coming revolution must reconcile all the elements of social life for the general good, as the Fourierists dreamed of doing: we must not stifle some elements for the advantage of others." He regarded governmental or administrative centralization as inimical to freedom, but, though he was influenced to this extent by anarchist conceptions, he saw the complete elimination of the state as an almost infinitely receding possibility.

Finally, Herzen's concern with Russia, his sense of an immense potential energy underlying the hard crust of autocratic rule, never vanished. Like Marx, most of the radicals of western Europe refused to share his belief in the destiny of Russia, and they were right in rejecting the mystical elements that entered into his point of view. At the same time, Herzen's arguments were not entirely governed by sentiment. As an exile, he was able to look on Russia with more detachment than anyone within the country, and on western Europe with more detachment than most of the radicals who had spent their lives in its liberal and revolutionary movements. And, as the events of our century have tended to show, there was perhaps more truth in his idea that social initiative was passing out of the hands of western Europeans than in the thoughts of those who believed that Paris was the permanent capital of the revolution or that Germany would lead the new uprising of the proletariat. Behind all the writings of Herzen's later years there hovers the vision—how prophetic one is too uneasily aware—of Russia and America facing each other over a dispirited Europe.

A last—and not least—reason for Herzen's enduring relevance is to be found in the elaborate documentation of the nineteenth century revolutionary personality that appears in his memoirs. Herzen, the ironical radical aristocrat, was the nearest thing the nineteenth century produced to Orwell and Silone. Like them, even in disillusionment he could not destroy the rebellious inner urge that bound him to the movements of his time. Intellectually critical of the prejudices and follies of the men of 1848, he was still fascinated by their personalities and compassionate of their misfortunes. During his years in Switzerland and England he continued to live among political exiles, and from among them he chose most of his friends. He watched them with irony and perceptiveness, and in *My Past and Thoughts* he left a series of portraits of revolutionary leaders and followers and of comments on the psychological quirks of the professional rebel which, even today, might be made into a handbook that radicals themselves could read with profit.

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To anyone who has known the boredom and exasperation of most radical group activity, Herzen's description of what he calls "the chorus of the revolution" ("Immovable conservatives in everything connected with the revolution, they stop short at some program and never advance beyond it") and the revolutionary bureaucracy, which "dissolves things into words and forms just as our official bureaucracy does," will seem apt and perennial, while those who have moved in contemporary circles of political exiles in Paris or London or Mexico City will recognize the melancholy truth of these remarks on the mentality which is developed by all but the most exceptional expatriates:

> Exile, not undertaken with any definite object, but forced upon men by the triumph of the opposing party, checks development and draws men away from the activities of life into the domain of fantasy. Leaving their native land with concealed anger, with the continual thought of going back to it on the morrow, men make no advance, but are continually thrown back upon the past; hope hinders them from settling down and undertaking any permanent work; irritations and trivial but exasperated disputes prevent their escaping from the familiar circle of questions, thoughts and memories which make up an oppressive binding tradition.

In the last resort, Herzen can be fitted into no category in the history of radicalism. He represents, more than almost any other man of his age, the kind of disillusioned yet committed intellectual, the revolutionary *malgré lui,* with whom we have become familiar in the twentieth century. For him, as for the best of his type today, the rejection of methods, the loss of facile optimism, the development of a realistic view of persons, did not mean the abandonment of an ideal, the rejection of a moral standpoint. The kind of betrayal of inner experience, the masochistic self-degradation which one encounters in men like Chambers and Koestler, and which in Herzen's day formed the less pleasant side of Dostoevsky's mental history, would have seemed too undignified and—perhaps most important—too absurd for him even to consider. Herzen had his faults in plenty—his aristocratic habits and prejudices, his semi-romantic lapses from realistic thinking, his considerable vanity, his comparative ignorance of economic trends—but, even when these are taken into account, he belongs to a breed of men whose therapeutic irony and psychological penetration make them indispensable to any movement of thought that is to avoid its own conservatism, its own ossification into orthodoxy. For, if the radical intellectual has a second purpose beyond that of thinking creatively about the world in which he lives, it is surely that of preventing the radical mind from becoming so armoured with complacency that it loses all power of adaptability and growth.

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Imagination and Dreams in Foreign Aid

Eugene Burdick

I am one of the authors of *The Ugly American*. The one, who as Mr. Buttinger so graciously puts it, "calls himself a political scientist." The editors of DISSENT describe the essay by Mr. Buttinger as a "sustained polemic" against *The Ugly American*. I am no stranger to polemics and would have been pleased to argue the value of our novel as well as the larger issues of politics.

But Mr. Buttinger does not enter into a polemic. He enters into a Kafka-like world in which arrogance becomes identical with authority, suspicions once voiced are accepted as "facts," dark revelations are promised and their darkness becomes their proof. I am not quarreling with the boring or angry aspects of the essay. They are not a necessary part of polemics, but they are frequent. I am asserting that Mr. Buttinger's essay is literally senseless.

I can conceive of no basis on which the essay can be refuted. It has nothing to do with logic, with standards of proof, with evidence. In the same way that nightmares or pure acts of imagination cannot be "proved" I cannot prove that the essay is fallacious. To do that one would have to enter into Mr. Buttinger's private nightmare. I think there are sound reasons for not making the trip. Mr. Rovere in *Senator Joe McCarthy* talks about McCarthy's use of the "multiple untruth" and the impossibility of "refuting" McCarthy once you enter the labyrinth of his assertions. Mr. Buttinger's case is more difficult because he accompanies untruth with a kind of rowdy and enchanting ignorance of logical presentation and a soaring imagination which alternates strangely with a harsh Prussian bark to believe something because he asserts it. One can enter such a weird literary structure only by forfeiting rationality.

Let me state at the outset that I agree with Mr. Buttinger's estimate of the "literary quality" of *The Ugly American*. We wrote the book hurriedly, with a sense of great urgency, and while separated by a great distance. Such conditions make for rough work, a lack of polish and some jarring transitions. I have never differed with critics who remark the literary imperfections of the book. Mr. Lederer and I were, from the start, fully aware of them. It was not our *intention*, a thing which Mr. Buttinger seems persistently incapable of perceiving, to write a polished literary novel. His persistent outrage and anger on this point only serve to confuse the main issues. Let me also state that I think there are substantial errors of emphasis and interpretation in *The Ugly American* and I have tried to acknowledge them publicly whenever I have been convinced they are demonstrated.

The Buttinger essay opens by suggesting a dark plot. It states flatly that our novel had a large initial sale because it was "bought and distributed

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in unusually great numbers by private parties and organizations" and Mr. Buttinger suggests these parties were hostile to foreign aid. He states that "thousands" of copies were sold in this stealthy and organized way by right-wingers and isolationists. As proof of this plot he cites a public letter by Senators Kennedy and Engle, Bishop Pike, Morris Ernst, Julie d'Estournelles and Harold Stern which they sent, along with a copy of the book, to each U. S. Senator. Now all of the signatories happen to be "internationalists," the 98 copies were paid for by Mr. Ernst, and it was the only large private order which the publisher received. Mr. Buttinger could have verified this by a single phone call to the publisher's office. But in the strange world of "fact" in which he operates an extensive plot has been proven. Later he freely refers to the plot as if it were an established fact.

When Mr. Buttinger lifts his eyes away from *The Ugly American,* the mere ink fumes of which cause him to whimper with outrage, and looks at the world of reality he sees "facts" in a most alarming way. In the many pages he uses to describe Vietnam there are so many factual misstatements and so many strange gaps that one is forced to recognize that Mr. Buttinger has invented new categories of fact, opinion and knowledge. I shall discuss this below in some detail.

Serious criticism, and good polemics, do not usually attempt "attribution of motivation" because it has proved to be an undemonstrable and generally feckless argument. Mr. Buttinger has no such restraint. He freely attributes motives of malignancy, "action," "simplism" to Mr. Lederer and me. He goes even further, he freely predicts how we would act in situations which *he invents. His chest swells with ritualistic liberal anger when he states that were* Lederer and Burdick responsible for Philippine policy we would fire Ambassador Bohlen. In another context he says "because I happen to believe Chester Bowles was a splendid ambassador to India . . ." he must reject our views on political appointments to ambassadorships. There is no entailed or implied logic by which we would "fire Ambassador Bohlen." Our book says nothing of Bowles or India. But once having invented the fiction, Mr. Buttinger can work up a real enough rage. But he seems unaware that spending good names is not really evidence.

One last comment about the "mood" of the essay. It has a kind of fractured, rambling, change of pace style which is so audacious and irrelevant and chaotic that one is tempted to believe that there *must* be an orderliness *which is only slightly obscured.* The credentials of anger and contempt are real enough so, one reasons, the evidence must also be real. One does not have to read *The Ugly American,* however, to detect that this onrush of style contains a basic fault.

The fault happens to be an embarrassing one to remark. It is not good form today in political discourse to criticize a flawed logical analysis. I have no such inhibition. Mr. Buttinger commits the fallacies of *petitio principii* and *ignoratio elenchi* with such primitive abandonment and so frequently that he, at least, must be innocent of their commission. It is precisely these two fallacies which cause the trained logician to groan in despair, but which can give a shabby analysis a glossy surface. Let me give one example of each;

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the informed reader can then reexamine the essay and see for himself what an appallingly large part of Mr. Buttinger's pages are rendered logical nonsense.

An example of the use of *petitio principii,* the trick of surreptitiously introducing an assumption and then proceeding as if it were fact, is his description of the "plot" to promote initial sales of the book. An example of the use of *elenchi,* which is simply arguing beside the point, is contained in Mr. Buttinger's assertion that *The Ugly American* advocates "little projects" exclusively.

This is simply not so. The book advocates "relevant projects." We state explicitly in the book and have repeated in articles and speeches, that relevant aid might in some cases consist of enormously expensive and sophisticated developments. We do argue that in politics there is no such thing as an etiological vacuum. Things have causes and precedents. We argue that in many countries "little things" like literacy, an adequate diet and a minimum level of health must be undertaken before industrialization can proceed. Aid in this form can often be inexpensive and involve a high degree of self-help.

Once having demonstrated, by the felicity of *elenchi,* that we believe only in "little projects" the essay launches into a most detailed examination of little projects scattered around Southeast Asia. Mr. Buttinger dips into "sources," newspapers, the Ellender hearings, magazines and with rising excitement concludes that he has effectively destroyed "the basis upon which Lederer and Burdick attack American foreign aid." It is delicious and it is proof but it happens to be a delicious proof of nothing that we ever asserted.

Let me confess that Mr. Buttinger does all of this very dramatically. Several times he threatens to "expose the political inanities of *The Ugly American.*" Each time he mutters off-stage apologies to the cruel but necessary injury he is going to do to the authors and to the "many people who have openly endorsed *The Ugly American.*" I, for one, always tensed with a thrilled anticipation at each threatened demolition. Each, alas, turns out to be a disappointment. Sometimes the essay wheels and addresses itself to problems of India. Then to the "atrocious" style of the book. Then to sudden flat assertions. But the sound of intellectual demolition, the slash of a solid idea, never quite becomes audible. I wish, alas, that this were due wholly to the rigor of *The Ugly American.* It is not. The book is vulnerable but not to the frenzied attack which Mr. Buttinger mounts.

IN A SENSE most of the foregoing is marginal to my chief purpose in writing. Like the editors and the readers of DISSENT I am much more interested in the general political discourse and ways in which it might be made more tough-minded, meaningful and general. In a very negative way I think Mr. Buttinger does much to illuminate this argument or process quite regardless of what he has to say about *The Ugly American.*

Mr. Buttinger apparently believes that political reality is discovered by assembling or quoting what he calls "sources." If a "source" is cited the quotation becomes a fact. Let me give two examples. First, he states flatly that the famous and controversial highway in Thailand serves both a military and economic function. The "source" is an official statement by the International Cooperation Administration to that effect. The "source" itself offers no evidence,

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no statistics and no proof, but Mr. Buttinger accepts it as a form of reality. Second, as evidence that high French army officers came to understand Mao's tactics he quotes C. L. Sulzberger. He seems unaware that Sulzberger is only writing an opinion. The citation does not quite prove what Mr. Buttinger wishes to prove, but let us ignore that. What seems to me important is the enormous and mystical weight which the essay gives to "sources." I seem to be suggesting that Mr. Buttinger is guilty of gross empiricism. I am.

His Comtean faith that a mountain of documentation must inevitably squeeze out a drop or two of truth is not inferred, it is made explicit by Mr. Buttinger. He states "*whatever* statements . . . are made about American overseas policy can be substantiated . . . *only* by producing accurate figures and reliable dates, by citing specific projects and correct names of places, by relating verifiable events and by using many other relevant data, all of which are available to anyone who is willing to work through the growing bulk of official and private publications on the subject." (Emphasis added) This is epistemological nonsense. It is also logical, philosophical and moral nonsense. Leaving aside the serious and significant conflict about the meaning of verification and relevance of which Mr. Buttinger may not be aware, does he honestly mean to assert that before I can state that a peasant must "pay off" four different sets of officials before marketing produce in Saigon I must read all of the "growing bulk of official and private publications"? None of these "sources" would reveal this although it is a fact.

This confusion about facts and reality, about opinion and knowledge, leads Mr. Buttinger into the most practical difficulties when he comes to talk about politics. He devotes a good fraction of his essay to Vietnam and that is proper for he has been there often. Some of his facts are simply wrong. For example, his statistics on rice in Vietnam are simple nonsense. This year southern Vietnam is importing, not exporting, rice. His suggestion that southern Vietnam is industrializing efficiently is also nonsense. As recently as 1957 millions of dollars of American aid have not produced one viable industry in southern Vietnam. But more importantly in his fascination with facts Mr. Buttinger works himself into a position in which any discussion of politics becomes impossible. He does not, for example, mention that Diem is widely regarded by most Asian leaders as being an aspiring oriental Franco. He says nothing of constitutionalism, liberty, a free press, political parties or, in fact, anything "political" about Vietnam. The fact is that our aid program has produced what may become a family dominated police state in Asia.

The persistent problem of politics is to move beyond facts. Ideology, aspiration, nationalism, normative and value judgments are all examples of things which have profound political effects but are not admissible as facts under Mr. Buttinger's definition. Some facts are adamantine and some are flexible. Also new facts can, deliberately, be produced. The task of politics is to make the evaluation.

Mr. Buttinger emphasizes that politics is complex and intricate. He implies, quite wrongly, both that this is a novel situation and that one cannot move politically until one has "full knowledge." Politics has always, of course, been complex and intricate. The only thing that distinguishes the present political era is the paralyzing belief that sheer intricacy paralyzes action. And,

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of course, total knowledge is both impossible and unnecessary at least at this stage of our development.

I have written too much and for this I apologize. I also apologize for not being "more responsive" to Mr. Buttinger's essay. The simple fact is that I could only have been responsive by meeting him on his own terms and this I consider irresponsible.

Joseph Buttinger replies:

I find Mr. Burdick's reply to my critique of *The Ugly American* not at all to the point. Instead of discussing the factual content of my essay, Mr. Burdick tried to show that I was unfit to write it. For this reason, I have been of two minds ever since I was asked to reply. I can hardly be expected to follow in Mr. Burdick's footsteps. This discussion is supposed to be concerned not with me but with the facts of foreign aid, about which Mr. Burdick unfortunately makes only a few brief remarks.

I could pick up these remarks and show that *The Ugly American does* condemn "big" and request small projects, or prove that the book *has* something to say about India (something so embarrassing that Mr. Burdick is now trying to forget it). Or I could demonstrate that *The Ugly American is* being used by the enemies of foreign aid to fight the entire program. But I have done all this in my essay, and see no reason to repeat what I have already said.

My reluctance is intensified by Mr. Burdick's extreme sensitivity in reacting to anything I say and how I say it. This led him to employ many terms of abuse (in addition to "nonsense," of which he discovered in my essay no less than five different kinds) to which I really cannot reply. Frankly, I find it a nuisance that custom allows me to have the last word. But if I should refuse to answer, Mr. Burdick would undoubtedly regard this as further proof of my "arrogance" and so I decided to write this reply, hoping to give Mr. Burdick no fresh cause to complain about my "harsh Prussian bark."

WHAT SURPRISED me most is Mr. Burdick's admission of his inability to deal with the content of my critique. He states that "he can conceive of no basis on which the essay can be refuted."

Before I discuss what Mr. Burdick really means with this statement, I shall take it literally and say that I can easily conceive of someone undertaking a thorough study of the subject and showing me in error on so many points that my essay would in fact be refuted. Yet this would not lead me to conclude that my critique of *The Ugle American* was unfounded. The picture of American foreign aid operations that emerges from my essay is on the whole more hopeful than that of many other students. In this I may be mistaken. A truer picture than mine may also be a sadder one. But I am fairly confident that this would make the picture given by Lederer and Burdick no less false.

However, Mr. Burdick, although he states he cannot refute my essay, does not really mean that my arguments are too solid to be disproved. In his eyes my assertions are so senseless and my conclusions so contrary to all

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logic that to "enter" my essay (i.e. to discuss what I say), would mean "forfeiting rationality." He ends his article by saying that it would have been "irresponsible" of him to meet me on my own terms.

These are obvious excuses. Once Mr. Burdick had decided to answer my critique, he was obliged to meet me on my own terms. No one can miss seeing that these terms are clear and simple. Because verifiable facts and figures are so essential to determine the truth in regard to foreign aid, and form such a substantial part of all my arguments, Mr. Burdick's task was easy to perceive. It consisted in demonstrating (by using, if possible, better sources, and by applying better logic than I), that the facts I described were wrongly presented, the figures I used dated or incorrect, the documents I quoted insufficient, and the conclusions I drew therefore wrong. My sins against all "standards of proof" and my "many factual misstatements," far from making the refutation of my essay impossible, could only have facilitated Mr. Burdick's task.

I believe Mr. Burdick felt that he should have done this but had to persuade himself that it could not be done. This is why he depreciates the value of sources, ridicules my alleged faith in "mountains of documentation," accuses me of "gross empiricism," and lectures me on "the serious and significant conflict about the meaning of verification and relevance" of which he suspects I must be unaware. But all this is beside the point. The nature of proof and verification I have chosen is related to the subject I discussed, which meant dealing largely with verifiable facts, most of them of a kind that can be stated precisely only by giving correct figures. For the purpose of showing *The Ugly American* is untrue to fact, my sources, as well as my methods of documentation, were both necessary and adequate. As to the need in politics "to move beyond facts," I would be astonished to hear that in my essay, because of its emphasis on documentation, I was left without space for evaluations and opinions. Indeed, it is too late for Mr. Burdick to teach me that the facts of tyranny can be opposed with action based on opinions and ideas, and too late for me to forget that all our attempts to oppose or modify unwelcome facts are doomed unless we know their weight, measure their scope, and understand their meaning.

I am afraid this is what Mr. Burdick does not realize. Ignorance of facts due largely to his not verifying what he thinks he knows, characterizes most of his statements that are not mere expressions of opinion. To give an example, Mr. Burdick says of my statistics on rice in Vietnam that they are "simple nonsense," adding that "this year Southern Vietnam is importing, not exporting, rice." He is pitifully uninformed. South Vietnam's rice export for the first six months of 1959 was 135,000 tons, against a total of 117,000 for the entire year of 1958, and conservative estimates are that in 1959 it will reach a post-war high of 300,000 tons.

How is it possible for someone who claims to be informed about Southeast Asian affairs to be so wrong? These figures were published in all leading economic journals of the world, and only a person determined to make a fool of himself would question their correctness. It is hard to believe that Mr. Burdick has not come across these figures, and impossible to take him seriously if he made his statement while knowing them. For this would mean

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that in addition to simply not knowing facts essential for sound political judgment, Mr. Burdick, if it fits his arguments, decides to what degree an established fact shall be permitted to exist. And let no one say that this is too absurd to serve as an explanation for his categorical statement that South Vietnam exports no rice in 1959. It would simply mean that Mr. Burdick is afflicted with a disease of the political mind which is not nearly as rare as most people think.

One symptom of this disease is a tendency to confuse fact and opinion. An example is the passage in Mr. Burdick's article in which his opinion that South Vietnam is about to become a "police state" is presented as a "simple fact." Because of my other writings on Vietnam there is no need for me to explain why I disagree with this opinion. Here I would like to discuss a more complicated example, one in which Mr. Burdick mixes prejudiced opinion with possible fact. I am referring to his statement that a Vietnamese peasant can sell on the Saigon market only after bribing four sets of officials. Mr. Burdick's ignorance (or wilful neglect) of the relatively simple facts concerning rice does not recommend him as a judge of more complex aspects of Vietnamese life, but the matter is serious enough to deserve examination, and so I shall discuss it under the assumption that Mr. Burdick knows why he calls this a fact. Is he willing to produce some kind of evidence to show that this story is true? He need not fear that anyone expects him to quote "official sources," but I would insist on more than the usual Saigon cocktail party gossip, in which fact and fiction are always as hopelessly mixed as in *The Ugly American*. I say that if Mr. Burdick can prove that his story has some basis in fact, he will be surprised to learn how quickly the culprits will be thrown out of office and after due process of law go to jail.

I must make one more point to clear up a misunderstanding. In speaking of pre-publication sales and bulk sales after publication, I nowhere say or imply that there was a "plot," let alone one to which either the publishers or the authors were a party. I cannot quite see why Mr. Burdick feels that these sales have to be denied or defended. They are neither illegal nor immoral. My interest was in their political significance. I regard them as evidence of the book's usefulness as a weapon against foreign aid. I know (and have tried to explain), that liberals in favor of foreign aid have praised *The Ugly American,* but this contradicts my assumption as little as Lederer's and Burdick's claim to be recognized as defenders of a cause to which their ill-informed and denunciatory book has done considerable harm.

In conclusion, I shall try to state the reasons why I think that Mr. Burdick is not just unwilling, but really unable to refute my essay. In order to counter my factual statements and arguments, he would have to spend more time on research than he and Lederer, by their own admission, have devoted to the writing of their book. Through study, Mr. Burdick would probably become acquainted with enough facts to disprove some of my assertions. But if he did, he would make a shocking discovery: the better he is equipped to show me in error, the more clearly he will see the falseness of his own views. He would then recognize that the work required to refute me should have been done before *The Ugly American* was written, which means, however, that Lederer and Burdick would have produced either no or an entirely different book.

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Moreover, for Mr. Burdick to devote himself to a real study of sources would undermine his concept (and present role) of political agitator and very likely also destroy his chance to remain a popular and successful writer on national and international affairs. He would then become only another one of the many serious and respected American scholars who work hard to produce good books which sometimes get published but rarely ever sell.

P. S. I discovered only after I had written the above that Mr. Burdick, in quoting me, changes my text. He quotes me in order to take exception to my criteria for substantiating certain statements, namely (as my essay reads) statements "about the successes or failures of American *overseas operations in the field of technical assistance and economic aid. . . .*" Mr. Burdick changes the phrase I have here emphasized to "American overseas policy."

Classless Education in Class Society?

H. Brand

Michael Walzer has written a suggestive essay on American education [DISSENT, Spring and Summer 1959]. Yet, with all the thoughtfulness and knowledge he displays, I do not think that he has posed the key problems of American education.

Walzer commits the very error with which he reproaches the environmentalists: he formulates certain humanist (or socialist) standards of cultural value and demands that the schools live up to them, notwithstanding an industrialized and commercialized environment inimical to those standards, and the absence even of any social movement which could "validate" them. He expects the schools to resist the pressures of society, to set themselves against society if necessary, and adopt Marx's idea of an education befitting human beings. He demands a classless education in a class society.

The school "should" indeed be a humanizing, not a socializing agent. But Walzer himself demonstrates that in a class society it is inevitably the latter. One can expose the American school's empty equalitarianism and hypocritical pretensions to democratic education as Walzer does, and does well. But one cannot expect it, as a social institution, not to somehow reflect the structure and interests of the society of which it is part.

What I believe the American school should be attacked for is that it seeks to adapt the child to society instead of preparing him to make his own way in it. It is precisely this conservative role which the school is not fulfilling. But, unfortunately, this whole question of the school's not measuring up to the tasks which it can be *legitimately* required to perform is treated cavalierly by Walzer. For example: He would not have "children" 14 and 15 years old "waste" time on vocational training. He would have them devote themselves to the study of history, literature and science. But he himself indicates how little meaning such knowledge has for their daily lives and their future prospects. When the underprivileged are taught the same body of knowledge as the privileged, he says, there will be "conflict between school and home, and

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resistance, discouragement, even delinquency on the part of the child." Not to mention what would happen to the already discouraging state of the school retention rate. But onward—"... struggle and discouragement are the immediate price we pay in order to confront class society with equality and cultural value."

No, the confrontation of class society with equality and cultural value cannot and should not take place in the school. The question of education as Walzer, in effect, sees it is a *political,* not an "educational" question, which can be resolved only in the arena of politics. The school certainly is not such an arena.

But, for lack of a better one, Walzer would have it so, and in consequence gets tangled up in his own logic. Says he: "Today . . . a democratic culture is the necessary precondition for a democratic politics" and "The immediate responsibility for cultural democracy falls upon education." I don't know whether these statements are meant as contentions to be proved or as injunctions to be followed. Considering the actual state of American education as he describes it, they lack all substance. In a class society, you do not have a democratic culture; and the schools, class institutions that Walzer shows they are, cannot shoulder the responsibility for cultural democracy. So we are back at politics. That education in the sense of intellectual, emotional and political experience must precede and contribute to the crystallization of the political will is, of course, undeniable. But the agencies for *that* kind of education lie far beyond the narrow precincts of the school.

OF THE SCHOOL, however, one must demand that it stick, at a minimum, to its "narrow," "limiting" tasks. Walzer won't settle for that, but let him contemplate the reference he quotes from an article in the *Bulletin* of the National Association of Secondary School Principals to the "neglected sixty per cent" of American students, who are presumably destined to earn their livelihood at the "large number of jobs . . . requiring no unusual aptitudes or interests." At a minimum, the school must train and sharpen the *usual* aptitudes, awaken and heighten the *usual* interests, so that young people are enabled to stand on their own feet and improve their situation.

But this means precisely that far more serious attention be given to vocational and technical training in a variety of productive skills, so that the graduating student may choose from a broad selection of jobs and can move to other, more suitable and better jobs if he desires. It is wrong, if not irresponsible, to postpone such training until after the student has had his fling with history, literature and science. The mass of students—"the sixty per cent"—must first of all see to it that they be not nailed down to some mind-crimping, soul-starving job; and on-the-job training, by early overspecialization of the trainee's faculties, has that very effect, thus limiting his mobility, blocking his chances and making him unreceptive, even hostile, to the effort needed to acquire a measure of culture.

Walzer ignores the liberating element inhering in the possession of well-grounded skills, given the fact that we have to get on in a class society where the leisure needed for a rounded development is available to only a few. To the "neglected sixty per cent," skills mean what property once meant to the

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landless peasant: a small but relatively secure area of personal independence, a source of self-respect, a starting point for self-development.

What then happens to that "stubborn, persistent effort to make knowledge and culture, or at least access to them, as universal as possible"? Michael Walzer, count me as your comrade-in-arms in making this effort. But let me repeat, it is a political, not an educational effort. The school can become its vehicle only when there is genuine equality among men.

Michael Walzer replies:

Politics is no longer a magic word. Mentioning it permits a radical writer neither to solve all problems nor to postpone them. Those great political events, transforming class society, replacing class culture and education with some better, higher form, still give no sign of occurring. It is time we became wary about the possibilities of politics.

Through political activity we can, perhaps, produce better school *buildings;* we can raise teachers' salaries and provide more scholarships. These are important things, and, quite by themselves, will have much of the effect Mr. Brand desires. But cultural democracy is something else. It is dependent first upon the existence of *ideas* about culture. It requires a recognized tradition of artistic and intellectual creation, criticism and controversy, and a body of men to carry on this tradition, to respond to it, to be vitally interested in it. Much of what I wrote about American education was written out of an acute feeling of danger *here.* I felt that we were losing our sense of cultural value and our concern for its future. Brand apparently does not recognize, or admit, this danger—and I hope he is right. But surely the response to such a threat, if it exists, must be an intellectual one.

Given such a response (and it is problematic enough), can material of cultural significance be taught in the school? Brand believes the task to be hopeless in a class society, and would presumably await that political apocalypse which will usher in classlessness. But is America in fact simply a class society? In writing my articles I attempted to set up the two ideas of "class" and "mass" as alternative conceptual frames within which *different* problems had to be examined—probably unsuccessfully since I can't claim to have too firm a grip on either idea right now. But I have no doubt that Brand's views are distorted by his having too firm a grip on only one of these ideas. For my present purposes the notion of mass society need indicate nothing more than a world in which "common knowledge" of a sort is not only possible, but has already begun to exist. In education this common knowledge takes the form which Brand dismisses as a training in adaptation and adjustment. He is, of course, correct, but he would do well to look again: in the world we live in *"life adjustment" is also a form of vocational training.* Adaptation to mass culture is indeed a mind-crimping process, but it by no means impedes material advance. Vocational training such as Brand suggests, on the other hand, might well equip a young man for nothing more than the unemployment lines of Detroit and Pittsburgh. The notion that productive skills can serve as a basis for personal independence seems to me curiously old-fashioned. Personality is a greater "asset" today; it takes a man further.

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As for making one's way in the world: Brand would be no happier than I with an education deliberately designed for that. Already there is instruction in how to sell oneself . . .

I SURELY AGREE with Brand's passionate desire to free the "sixty per cent" from stupid, wasteful jobs and all that goes with them. How to do so is another question; I frankly doubt his solution, which would turn the schools into training institutes for productive labor. Some of these jobs —but by no means all—are the inevitable resort of the poor. Here, it seems to me, is a practical, political problem: the elimination of poverty requires an expanding economy and an expanding welfare program, slum clearance, minimum wages, etc. It requires also that expansion of our educational establishment which I described above: more buildings, teachers, scholarships. But such social improvements will undoubtedly not in themselves produce either economic or cultural independence, for independence is not the concern of the welfare state.

I think that it was for the sake of that same independence which Brand values so highly that I attempted to portray the school as a cultural battleground—and not merely as an agent of social improvement. The term is not overdramatic. It is only on such a battleground that the "usual aptitudes and interests" can be heightened and sharpened. Independence—it is worth repeating—is a matter of effort and struggle. Let the usual and the unusual alike master the cultural canon (however it is defined), or let them fight it and create outside it a culture of their own. I see no reason why schools, even in a class society, cannot represent something at least of cultural value. They will also, of course, reflect social and political interest. But the actual extent to which a particular teacher in a class room compromises with such interests is problematic. And the issue between teacher and student is always in doubt.

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4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

STANLEY PLASTRIK
Business Manager

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 31st day of August, 1959.

[SEAL] CLARA WOLF
Notary Public

(Commission Expires March 30, 1961)

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BOOKS

A Noncomformist Radical Thinker

ASPECTS OF REVOLT, by Max Nomad. Bookman Associates, New York, 1959. 288 pp. $5.00.

This collection of essays by the veteran writer Max Nomad is a reminder that we do have a radical who has devoted himself to uncovering unorthodox socialist thinkers and applying their theories to contemporary questions. Appropriately enough for the author of an earlier volume entitled *A Skeptic's Political Dictionary and Handbook for the Disenchanted,* Nomad's reward has been that some American radical intellectuals have expropriated his concepts without discussing their usefulness or recalling their source. James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution,* for example, was an application of some of the views of Waclaw Machajski, the Polish revolutionist whose ideas were first presented in America in Nomad's *Rebels and Renegades* in 1932.

Nomad quotes this passage from Machajski published in Russia in 1918. (By 1920 even the re-publication of Machajski books of twenty-five years earlier was prohibited):

> The workers will not have their "workers" government even after the capitalists have disappeared. As long as the working class is condemned to ignorance, the intelligentsia will rule through the workers' deputies. The intelligentsia defends its own interests, not those of the workers. . . . After the expropriation of the capitalists, the workers will have to equalize their incomes with those of the intellectuals, otherwise they are doomed to manual labor, ignorance, and inability to manage the life of the country. . . .

Machajski's works were infused with a condemnation of the Social Democratic spokesmen for their failure to recognize that, as he saw it, they were not actually concerned with the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism but with their own hope of obtaining privileged status maintained by education, the "capital" of the intelligentsia. To obtain this status the intellectual revolutionists offered, sometimes sincerely, sometimes hypocritically, aid in the workers' struggle for higher wages and equality.

To this, Nomad had added an acceptance of Michels' "iron law of olicarchy" and his own version of the "permanent revolution":

> What improvements of their lot the masses have obtained in the course of history are due to their struggles under the leadership of those "out-elites" or would-be oligarchies, which in the process would obtain or attempt to obtain, power for themselves. And whenever those

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"out-elites," having become "in-elites" or oligarchies, turned their back on the masses, a new "out-elite," hungry for power, takes up the cause of the masses, and so on, infinitum. The majority may be a "pedestal," but that pedestal is subject to ever recurring quakes, shaking or changing the oligarchs standing on top of it, and occasionally lightening the burden carried by the pedestal. Thus Michels' pessimistic "iron law of oligarchy" implies another "iron law" as well: that of permanent revolt against oligarchy, whether feudal, capitalist or bureaucratic-managerial.

THERE IS in *Aspects of Revolt,* as in Nomad's earlier books, a considerable number of valuable insights for an analysis of contemporary trends, particularly since Nomad is much more hard-headed and realistic than those sociologists currently dealing with bureaucratic decision-making and status symbols. There are, nonetheless, some difficulties. Even if one accepts the thesis that the managerial elite represents a new class, it is necessary to consider the decisive role that the political party plays within the bureaucracy, particularly in Communist countries. Occasional signs that the managers would pursue their own aims more intently than the Party might wish have vanished quickly whenever Communist leaders have asserted the primacy of a Party decision. In non-Communist Asian countries, middle-class college graduates who adopt radicalism as a means of obtaining positions within the state bureaucracy do not thereby become prime movers of revolt.

In Nomad's permanent revolution, social change results from the incessant demand of the dispossessed for more of the better things of life, accompanied by a continuous succession of rulers, the "outs" challenging the "ins" until the end of time. This seems to involve a minor contradiction, since the very assurance of such changes—the clamor of the masses satisfied temporarily by the replacement of one revolutionary elite by another—would seem to imply the possibility of improvement for the mass of workers, despite repeated betrayals by their champions.

The question of education is also one of some complexity, since it would appear that it is a weapon which the political bureaucracy can wield with extraordinary effectiveness in Communist countries. Khrushchev, who has already proved himself worthy of Stalin's mantle, has now begun to close some doors of higher education, thus forcing the managerial and technical intelligentsia, whom some observers profess to see as a liberalizing force burgeoning in post-Stalin Russia, to think twice before risking the chance of losing the opportunity to educate their children. In China the intellectuals in the bureaucracy are kept in line by the possibility of their being suddenly dropped into the abyss where workers and peasants dwell. As Nomad has pointed out on another occasion, the ultimate threat of Communist Party leaders is a decision to convert a bureaucrat into one of the working masses, the putative "rulers" of a Communist country.

IN HIS LAST CHAPTER, which deals with the question of the failure of socialism to strike permanent roots in the United States, Nomad predicts that the critical force in American life is

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the growing engineering and technological aristocracy which may, under conditions of large-scale unemployment, resurrect plans for a society run by engineers, à la Veblen. This chapter, a most provocative one, perhaps oversimplifies the range of possibilities—it fails to deal with the new influence of the military in the American economy and culture—but the approach is nonetheless a novel one.

Nomad is assertively pessimistic—his support of a democratic socialist Welfare State is based on the feeling that it is the least objectionable variety of inequality—but his analysis is pervaded by the hope that the claims of equality will result in easing the lot of the common man. Equality as a goal and as an evaluative tool—in income distribution, in race relations, in cooperation among peoples and nations—has almost disappeared as a guide in current socialist thought. Yet, it is a concept that can be central for socialists now attempting to review their beliefs.

There is a reminiscent aura in *Aspects of Revolt,* but it is to Nomad's credit that he has kept alive for radicals some of the more viable—and altruistic—values of the socialist tradition, and has been himself the exemplar of the truly non-conformist radical thinker. HERMAN SINGER

So Many Fallen

THE JEWISH LABOR BUND, A PICTORIAL HISTOR. FARLAG UNSER TSAIT. 1958. 198 pp. $5.00

The first picture in this book shows the house in Wilno where the Bund, the Jewish Socialist movement of Poland, held its secret founding convention in 1897. The last picture shows a handful of Jewish children who were saved from the Nazis in 1945.

What happened in the intervening years is the tragic burden of this book. Here are the pictures of the earliest group of Jewish radical workers in Poland, posing stiffly in their hope; the faces of those who went off to Siberia, those who were murdered by the Polish police, and those who survived long enough to be murdered by the Gestapo and GPU. Later come the pictures of the Bund leaders, Ehrlich and Alter, whom the Stalin government deceived and destroyed; and many more, unknown to all but the Bund militants, who were also tortured and shot by the German and Russian police. At the end a tiny remnant survived, a scattering of Bundists who now live in almost every country but the one of their birth.

It is a heart-rending book. Anyone who cares to learn something about the quality of modern history should look into it—or the quality of socialism at its best. For if ever there was a socialist movement of ethical humaneness which transformed the lives of its adherents, it was the Bund.

Looking at these strong sweet and innocent faces—so many fallen! so many victims!—one finds it hard to believe that all this human effort was mere waste and failure. Hard to believe that from such devotion there will not yet issue, in ways we cannot tell, something more than memories of martyrdom. I.H.

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We must have the courage to understand that a new mode of economic organization is needed if freedom and independence of man are to grow. Political democracy requires today that the economic powers should no longer be able—as they have all too often in the past—to make laws in their own interest alone . . .

. . . The socialists of our time must become aware of certain things that are needed to achieve concrete, effective and rapid results. The first need is that of general economic information and information pertaining to a particular enterprise, as has so often been stated by worker and union representatives. Representatives of employers and workers do not debate today on terms of equality. The employers possess all the technical, financial and economic data, while workers' representatives can put forward only vague demands based on approximate figures reached by guesswork and therefore easy to refute. Competent union leaders have recently asserted—and rightly—that even social reforms as spectacular as workers' participation in profits do not make much sense unless the workers and those who speak in their name have a more adequate knowledge of the enterprise.

A second fundamental preoccupation is the formation of a workers' elite capable of playing its part wherever economic aims and investments are decided, plans are made and control exercised. Men and women must be prepared to take over and to be ready as soon as possible to play their part in the economic development of our country . . .

If the aim of collective life and of those who are in charge of it is to improve the lot of the people and, in the first place, of those who are less favored, then we must above all develop the production of goods and riches. For this purpose we must promote an economy of full employment. We proclaim it to be intolerable and scandalous that the means of production—men, equipment, capital—are lost, wasted, not utilized or utilized solely for the satisfaction of narrow interests. We want all the means of production to work at full capacity so that the community benefits all the time from the maximum production of goods and riches. We want the growth of our economy to be stimulated; we want the brakes on that growth to be broken; and we hold that it is the responsibility of the state, of the government . . .

In a country as advanced as France, where there exists a widspread capital of knowledge, experience and education, there can be no contradiction between the demands of political democracy, of freedom and dignity of man, and the necessities of a controlled economic expansion, needed for a rapid growth.

Our ambition is to form tomorrow a nation where socialism will be the complement of political democracy and its natural and normal consequence. Here we are following Jaurès who explained that socialism was for him the conclusion of the lessons drawn from the French Revolution, an extension of the principles of 1789.

And so, here too, we are in agreement with the Socialists whom we rejoin.

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LETTERS

Puerto Ricans and Sentimentality

Editors:

I suppose if one were to total up the comments of Stanley Plastrik in his review of my book, *Island in the City*, [DISSENT, Spring 1959], the scales would be slightly more weighted on the "favorable" than the "unfavorable" side. A victory for me by close decision, if not a knockout. But still the whole thing depresses me, and not because of its "favorable" or "unfavorable" aspects. It depresses me because it exhibits exactly the kind of "approach to the problem" on the part of right-thinking, well-meaning men that the book, in its highest purpose, was designed to destroy. Mr. Plastrik begins by saying that I have written a "fine human document," and I suppose that's an inevitable label for a book on such a subject, even though no man in his right mind would want to read a "human document." He then quickly says that "It is a little on the sentimental side . . . but never mind . . . Wakefield can easily be forgiven a tendency to overplay his hand; the reader's common sense will redress the balance." God help us, I am sure that Plastrik is right. The reader who might begin to feel some emotion, some guilt, some disturbance at his lack of connection or understanding of these people [the Puerto Ricans in New York City], some relationship to them as human beings, need have no fear that he will be moved anywhere near the region of the gut rather than the brain: his common sense will redress the balance. His common sense tells him that the answers are to be found in more sober sources—statistics, graphs, interaction studies. Let us hold a conference, establish a foundation, offer grants for further study "in the field."

Plastrik says that there are a number of problems about the Puerto Ricans that *do* present difficulties. Quite true. But he doesn't mention one of the main, recurrent themes of the book—that most of the difficulties we have come to know as "Puerto Rican problems" are problems that were already a part of our own society and that the migrants have inherited from us when they came to New York. But those problems, which I talk about specifically, Plastrik doesn't go into. He says the major problem is one I do not discuss:

"The interaction between Puerto Rican culture with that of postwar America is different from all previous relationships between immigrant groups and the host culture of the U.S. Is it because this is the first instance of a pre-industrial minority group having to enter our 'mass society'?"

Well, I doubt it, since—as I stated in the book—the majority of migrants to the mainland are not, as is commonly believed, from an agricultural society, but from the cities and towns of the island, and most of them have worked in industries (which are multiplying on the island every year). But that is not the point. Mr. Plastrik does not point out what I am at great pains to make clear in the book—that I am a reporter, not a sociologist. I have neither the tools nor the inclinations to talk about such questions as Mr. Plastrik poses. I am talking about individual people, in specific situations, in a particular neighborhood Did you ever sit down in a man's kitchen, with his wife and kids, and ask him if he feels his troubles stem from the fact that he is from a pre-industrial minority group, entering our mass society? If you are sitting in that kitchen, in Harlem, such questions don't enter your head, and if they did, you would have to laugh.

On the point of education, which Plastrik feels I do not face candidly, he says that "the fact is, and much teacher experience substantiates this, the children of this people are undermotivated or little interested in education either for itself or for social advancement . . ." I think the report I quoted of a New York teacher's experience in teaching a year on the island, and finding the immense interest and stimulation in education among the students there; plus the conditions of life of these children in New York, as stated throughout the book, as well as the description of their specific problems in New York schools, are an answer to that question.

But I think the heart of our differences lies in Plastrik's statement that "Dan Wakefield has given of himself—probably too much of himself—in this effort."

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Oh no. All books are failures, to a greater or lesser degree, and mine is a failure precisely because I didn't give enough of myself. Can you live in Harlem and write a book about the people around you, people struggling to survive, children stunted from malnutrition, intelligent young boys hooked on heroin, and give too much of yourself? What a piddling thing it is you can give at all. My failure was in giving as little as I did, and if I had it to do over again, my aim would be not to give less but more, and not to quote from any documents—only people. I bother to put this down because I feel that the kind of attitude expressed in the review is one of the things that most needs dissenting against in American life today.

DAN WAKEFIELD

STANLEY PLASTRICK *replies:*

Evidently, Dan Wakefield is nettled by by review of his book in the Summer 1959 issue of DISSENT. This is both surprising and regrettable to me, particularly since I felt (and still feel) that I had been considerably more sympathetic to it than the several other reviewers I had read. And I still believe it's a book that ought to be read, although I must add that Wakefield's remarks only underline, for me at least, my criticism. Before answering his remarks I might mention the fact that my review ran barely a page in length and was hardly intended to be exhaustive.

1) My reference to the reader's "common sense" meant that and precisely that; *not,* as Wakefield assumes, "statistics, graphs, interaction studies." Common sense is defined in my dictionary as "sound, ordinary sense; good judgment." That's good enough for me; Wakefield's equation with the paraphernalia of pseudo-sociology is a false one. I must further add that the thing I liked about the book was precisely its distance from the type of pseudo-scientific "sociological" surveys which have been done on Puerto Ricans. How could he have missed this?

2) Wakefield claims that most of the so-called Puerto Rican problems are problems that were already a part of our own society which they have been inhering from us. I think this is the nub of our disagreement and accounts for what I described as his failure to grapple with real issues.

I described Puerto Rico as a "pre-industrial" society, a description to which he objects without offering a better one. This description implies a transitional phase between the former status of Puerto Rico as a depressed, impoverished agricultural community and a modern society. There has, apparently, been enormous progress but the very fact that it has been so recent must suggest that most of the people in its towns and cities have come but recently from the soil, with all that that implies.

I am aware that townspeople form the bulk of the migration to New York, but I am also aware that these are not really modern city people, with the background, formation, and education generally associated with the city. A clash of cultures results, and must result. This clash is intensified by the lack of sympathy—downright hostility—which the white host culture bears toward the immigrant culture. American mass society—New York—does not attempt to "integrate" the Puerto Ricans; it wants to beat them over the head; destroy them! Take but one example: the complete reversal of the woman's role as she migrates from one land to the other. In Santurce, a basic place in the family and home, as part of the open family system; in New York, more often than not the breadwinner, the worker. The effect of this alone upon the male Puerto Rican is of major significance. The point is that an obvious cultural clash is here involved; two ways of life meet; one, infinitely more powerful and domineering, imposes itself upon the other, but not without violence and desperation. Can Wakefield dispute this point?

This is not to deny that responsibility for the present troubles rests upon the New York City administration and its white residents. On the contrary, they are responsible. No other conclusion is possible from any reflection upon the problems of the Puerto Ricans as a group.

3) Education: Clearly, my remarks about education refer to New York City and New York City *alone;* the book I reviewed, after all, is about Spanish Harlem. I have no special knowledge of education in Puerto Rico itself and I don't doubt that Wakefield is right. But it is different here; there are special problems

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of motivation and attitude here; or does he deny this? In any case, he offers no information to the contrary. There does exist, however, a considerable amount of material dealing with this matter, in the form of teacher experiences, studies, etc.

4) Finally, a comment about Wakefield's insistence that it is "people" we must talk about. Now, I don't want to bring our disagreement down to the level of who sat in more Puerto Rican kitchens (he wouldn't, in any case, have much of a chance with me on that score) but I think this illustrates perfectly what I meant by his "sentimentality." (I resist the temptation to employ a harsher word.) I simply want to point out that the term "people," employed in this way, tends to become an abstraction, and an abstraction that can blind us, quite as much as any sociological notion, in the search for understanding and sympathy

S. P.

Unions & Import Quotas

Editors:

In his introduction to the Autumn DISSENT, Irving Howe notes that "Recently the garment unions, disturbed by competition from low-wage countries, have urged the reinstitution of tariff barriers"—a demand which he labels as "protectionism" later in the same paragraph. Apparently he is referring to the plan offered by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the ILGWU and the Textile Workers, to establish import quotas which would rise or fall with wage levels in the country of manufacture.

It is easier to dismiss this plan with a catchword than to suggest an alternative policy, but in fact it represents a serious effort to think out a solution to problems of 1959—problems to which the 19th century debate on protectionism versus free trade is completely irrelevant.

Barring some unprecedented world catastrophe, more and more of the so-called underdeveloped nations will become industrialized in the next 25 or 30 years. The future happiness of mankind depends not so much on how fast this process takes place, as on whether it results in a higher living standard in these countries or merely in strengthening oppressive governments and promoting a dozen local arms races in different parts of the world. Whatever countries reach full industrialization first will find their power and prestige greatly increased, and their social system will be the model their neighbors will imitate.

The outstanding merit of this plan is that it would give an advantage in the world's biggest consumer-goods market to those countries which have free government, a vigorous labor movement and a rising standard of living. (A simpler and more direct method would be to make all import duties inversely proportionate to wages in the country of manufacture, but this is barred by the most-favored-nation clause in practically every commercial treaty to which the United States is a party, which bars discrimination against any particular country by higher rates.)

If these three unions had thought only of the immediate interest of their own members they would have done what Mr. Howe accuses them of doing, and called for a simple rise in tariffs without regard to what foreign industries were hurt. Instead they have offered a plan that would introduce a new principle into tariff policy, the use of import quotas to encourage the improvement of social conditions in the nations with which we trade.

With much of Mr. Howe's criticism every intelligent union member would agree. It is therefore especially unfortunate that he has missed the significance of this plan—heartening evidence that the labor movement is still producing new ideas and fresh thinking on the problems of our time.

T. S. HOLMAN

Recording Secretary, Passaic County Industrial Union Council (CIO)

Roman Holidays

Editors:

I was interested in, and moved by, the note by L. C. called "No Exit" in the summer 1959 DISSENT, in which he expressed his horror at the way the Cuban government postponed the execution of several prisoners so that arrangements could be made for full TV coverage. Every civilized person will share his response. Yet I can't help wondering at his assumption that this sort of thing is somehow unique

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to mass society in our day. Surely he knows about Roman gladiators, and the public fascination with their blood. And surely he knows about the custom by which for many centuries in England hangings of criminals were held as public spectacles. It is true that present-day technology permits you to witness such gory spectacles while sipping beer in your armchair. But how, in principle, is this different from or worse than previous public displays of cruelty which also deprived victims of their privacy?

Cincinnati JOSEPH GOLDMARK

LEWIS COSER *replies:*

Cruelty, of course, is a generically human trait—animals are never cruel. Yet the deliberate exploitation of human suffering for public amusement, while not entirely absent in other periods, seems to me a characteristic of mass societies, Roman or modern.

Cooks and Socialism

Editors:

Ben B. Seligman's "Socialism without Marx" (DISSENT, Summer 1959) rehashes the celebrated fight between Lange and Dickinson on the one hand and Dobb on the other. Seligman concludes, or at least implies, that we must choose between a "command economy" and the "competitive solution of market socialism." Now Lange did not offer his theory as the one true image of socialism; he merely endeavored to prove that a competitive market could be retained despite government ownership of economic enterprise. Dobb's opposition was not offered in the spirit of serious intellectual inquiry but as a highly sophisticated, but intellectually dishonest, apology for Stalinism. Now that both Lange and Dobb have abandoned the positions they took then, there seems little reason to take the dispute seriously.

The Hobson's choice which Seligman offers us would appear to be a derivative of the notion that socialism is synonymous with government ownership, or at least dependent upon it. This notion seems to pervade the socialist and liberal intellectual world, from the Authoritarian Left to the politely *Dissenting* Right. May I point out that it is a misconception?

Socialism is an effort to achieve production for use. The price system and the system of competitive marketing do not achieve this goal and will not achieve it even though all economic enterprises be governmentally owned. An economy "commanded" by Government bureaucrats might achieve it, but is not likely to.

Production for use has been achieved in a great many instances by privately-incorporated consumers' cooperatives. Cooperation's most widely noticed successes have been in the field of wholesale and retail distribution—the very field as to which both Seligman and Galbraith assert socialism's unworkability. With governmental encouragement (but without governmental ownership or planning), it has worked near miracles in rural electrification and in rural telephone communications. Yet for Seligman—and for many others—it is not worth considering.

A socialist intellectual has even less justification than an academic economist for ignoring the cooperative approach to socialism. Granted, the idea of a "cooperative commonwealth" has never cut a wide swath among intellectuals in this country, but surely even the DISSENT-type thinkers have heard that there is a socialist party in Canada that bears a strangely familiar name, and that this very party is, essentially, a political expression of the cooperative movement. More erudite scholars may even recall the existence of a Cooperative Party in Great Britain which, in alliance with the Labor party, governed the country for several years. Surely, some speculation about the future of cooperation is in order if we are seriously attempting to review the socialist tradition.

Somewhere, in one of the socialist periodicals, I would like to see an article urging that socialist theory be reconstructed in accordance with Rochdale principles. Instead of seeking to *nationalize* economic enterprise, such an article might contend, let us seek to *democratize* it. Instead of extolling "national planning"—a most unattractive notion—the article might recommend a rewriting of the corporation laws. Instead of asking others to imagine what might be achieved if all industry were managed by Government bureaucrats, it would attempt to suggest what might be achieved if each

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private enterprise did business on a co-operative basis. As a general re-definition of a socialist program, the article might not succeed, yet it would force even the most thirties-bound intellectual to recognize the possibility of cooperative control of the retail-wholesale industry.

Washington, D. C. LURT HALL

BEN SELIGMAN *replies:*

I find it rather puzzling how to deal with Mr. Hall's complaint, since it is obvious from my article that its subject was the economic theory of socialism, not the cooperative movement. Perhaps Hall felt the discussion somewhat truncated, but it did concern itself only with a specific, limited area of the problem. If he is really interested in what I have to say about the broader issues of socialist economic theory, may I urge patience on his part until my larger treatment of the question will have been published some time in the future. The DISSENT article was obviously part of this projected analysis.

His letter nevertheless remains a huge non sequitur. It appears to be more of an excuse to protest against the alleged neglect of the consumer cooperatives rather than a reasoned, intelligent discussion of the socialism article. May I say, as a long time member of one of the larger Eastern coops, that I firmly believe in the Rochdale principles, but he will have to write a pretty persuasive piece to prove that these can establish a viable socialism. The political backwardness of the coops here and the patent record of unwillingness to move toward a "socialist" goal on the part of the European organizations, fails to lend support to Hall's curious optimism. In both Britain and Norway, to cite but two examples, the cooperatives (as well as the unions) have supplied much of the restraint on nationalization. Hall evidently admires this careful approach which leaves things quite as they are.

The fact is that socialism does imply a movement away from the private market and central control of at least the investment process. This calls into play a whole host of political as well as economic impulses and requires action that goes far beyond the retail-wholesale yardstick economy of the cooperatives. While Hall's thrashing about for alternatives is commendable, he does himself a disservice by cutting away from the major questions in any discussion on socialism, for these remain in many ways economic and political in character and must be worked out in a much broader arena than he would allow. Does Hall really believe that retail-wholesale cooperatives will achieve "production for use"? What does he propose to do about the automobile, steel, rubber, machine tool, aviation, printing, construction, railroad, glass making, coal, electric power generation and myriad other industries that account for the larger part of the gross national product —let alone the newer atomic energy and space travel industries?

Just one additional point—I haven't seen anything yet to suggest that Maurice Dobb has abandoned the position described in the article, while Lange, after having made dutiful obeisance to Stalinist economics prior to the famed 20th Congress, seems to be getting back to his earlier American views on the usefulness of market socialism. I'd suggest that Hall look up some of the recent interesting Polish discussions on the matter.

Washington, D. C.

On Crossing Pens

Editors:

The disputation between C. Wright Mills and Irving Howe concerning *The Causes of World War III* was an entirely predictable event. It reflects the contemporary radical dilemma—the inability to reach a consensus on the Cold War—which is exacerbated by the sense of powerlessness which engulfs us at the moment.

At the heart of radicalism is a profound commitment to philosophic anarchism. If radicals organize collectively for given purposes, it is an imposing concession to reality, and the act conjures an imposing burden of guilt. Polemical conflict eases the pain.

How ought we to view the Mills-Howe controversy? It is obviously an episode in the painful search for a radical consensus concerning the struggle between totalitarian and non-totalitarian societies. As such it is entirely desirable. If Mills is a little too careless about the totalitarian attributes of the Communist

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world, perhaps Howe is a little too careless about the signs of democratization therein. Both clearly recognize that Stalinism is intolerable. The key questions become: What are the chances for liberalizing change in the USSR? How real is democracy in the West? Mills believes the USSR is in the process of reconstituting itself into a viable society and he is severely critical of western democracy. Howe is doubtful that the recent changes in Russia indicate important changes, and is much more sympathetic to a bumbling but morally oriented Western strategy. Mills has remained truculent about the West (a reflection of his commitment to the impossible ought), whereas Howe has regained a sympathy for the best aspects of the Western tradition . . .

Given these differences, a clash—a crossing of pens— naturally suggests itself to such polemic-prone individuals. Lewis Coser having so nicely demonstrated that progress derives not simply from cooperation but also from conflict, we now possess a cogent intellectual rationale for looking rather benignly upon radicals temporarily in arms against each other. Nevertheless, in order to avoid still another split in the ranks, the prime curse of democratic radicalism, conflicts between influential polemicists must be subject to a certain discipline. It is not the controversy *per se* between Mills and Howe which causes some alarm; it is the mood and the language of it. The few radicals who remain should not begin clawing at each others' throats; they should pick each others' brains critically with sympathy and respect. Both Mills and Howe recognize this fact; a careful reading of their remarks in the Summer 1959 issue of DISSENT confirms this impression. They fail to practice what they preach. The entirely gratuitous comments each directs at the other's personal foibles cannot fail to excite and irritate readers. They obscure the issue at hand. What should be a conflict designed in the end to resolve differences or clarify unresolvable points of view could all too easily become a source of permanent divisions. Until we settle the question of the nature of the East-West conflict, we cannot get on to other tasks. We will not settle it by indulging in a kind of debate which ultimately divides rather than unites.

We desperately need both Mills and Howe in harness, even when they disagree. In fact, maybe we need them *most* when they diverge, provided they debate their differences in a *careful* way. Carefulness does not mean absence of passion; it does mean a specific attempt to avoid undue emphasis on personalities rather than ideas. Now clearly ideas are not easily divorced from personalities. But such commentary should be couched in carefully understated and tactful language. It should be designed to make the essential points clearly without encouraging —inciting might be a better word—the readership to open breaks and calls to the barricades in behalf of either Howe or Mills.

Connecticut DAVID F. TRASK

Polish "Revisionism"

Editors:

In his otherwise cogent reply to C. Wright Mills, on the attitude of intellectuals toward the Soviet bloc [DISSENT, Summer 1959], Irving Howe's fleeting remarks about the Polish area of this bloc are, in my opinion, most insufficient. When considering the Gomulka regime, Howe substitutes praiseworthy libertarian catchwords, in place of a more thoughtful appraisal of Poland's complex political, geographical and moral dilemma.

It is just not enough to state that all sincere socialists and democrats instinctively solidarize themselves with the harassed Polish revisionists, as opposed to "cultural spokesmen" for Gomulka. Without questioning this point in the slightest degree, I believe that the issues are somewhat less clear-cut when considering the following:

1. Many Poles (including revisionists and their allies) contend that, at present, there is no realistic alternative to Gomulka's foreign policy.

2. This implies that there is no alternative to many of the domestic consequences of Poland's remaining within the Soviet orbit.

3. All of which boils down to the hard and cruel fact that, according to these anti-Communist Poles, there is really no alternative to the Gomulka regime at this time—short of another

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blood-bath in the Hungarian style.

In the July-August 1959 issue of *Problems of Communism,* K. A. Jelensky (a pro-revisionist) stresses another important aspect of Poland's dilemma—the western frontiers along the Oder-Neisse line. In Jelensky's view, "as long as these frontiers remain unrecognized by the Western powers, many Poles will feel themselves condemned—quite aside from any other considerations—to remain faithful to the Soviet alliance . . ."

In view of these widely recognized facts of Polish political life, how adequate is Howe's sweeping generalization that *everything* in the *entire* Communist world, that helps to *disintegrate the rule of the regime,* is "good"? Are there not some specific qualifications that are in order when considering the Polish situation?

If many of our Polish comrades, known and unknown, with whom we instinctively solidarize ourselves, believe that the disintegration of Gomulka's rule (at this juncture in world events) would be national suicide—should this not make us all more cautious about excursions in sloganeering?

Should we, as socialists and democrats, ceaselessly attack the Gomulka regime, even in *our* way, without first clarifying what *kind* of an attack is called for under the circumstances?

Can one be a principled moral-political opponent of the Gomulka regime without calling for its overthrow?

Finally, doesn't the attitude of our Polish comrades imply some variety (however grudging and resigned) of "critical support" to Gomulka? If not, what then is the qualitative and quantitative difference between their attitude and the position of "critical support"?

I would be most appreciative if Irving Howe would offer his answers to these questions. I consider it imperative that these points be more adequately clarified if we, socialists and democrats, are exhorted not to yield a single political inch to Gomulka. PAUL WALLER

IRVING HOWE *replies:*

I am grateful to Mr. Waller for raising his questions, but in a brief comment cannot pretend to answer them. I agree with this sense of the complexities of the Polish situation, as well as his judgment that my "fleeting remarks" on Poland during my polemic with C. Wright Mills were inadequate.

My interest, in the short piece from which he quotes, was to specify the central attitude Western socialists and democrats, who unlike the Polish "revisionists" are free agents, should take toward the Communist bloc. That is why I stressed that we should support the dissenters of the east, not those who suppress them.

Still, Mr. Waller may be right in saying that at present there is no alternative to the Gomulka regime; though to admit this possibility is not necessarily to conclude that "critical support" (whatever that may mean) should be given the regime—which, by the way, keeps hardening toward a Khrushchevite authoritarianism and steadily whittling away the liberties won in 1956.

It is true that the Polish "revisionists" may have to work out tactical adaptations; they may even be reduced simply to waiting; but that is no reason why one should qualify one's principled opposition to Communist society.

When I wrote that I found "good" those forces in the Communist world which "help to crumble the party's monopoly of power," this does not mean that I fail to recognize that there may not be moments when socialists and democrats in Poland, as elsewhere, may have to act with restraint. No "position" in politics permits one to dispense with common sense.

Perhaps the difference between Mr. Waller and myself is that he is writing as a kind of fraternal adviser to the Polish "revisionists" while I was trying simply to indicate a general moral-political attitude toward Communism as a power in the world. Had I addressed myself to the problems he raises I should probably have said at least some of the things he does.

While on this matter, let me add a word of regret for the ill-tempered tone I took in replying to Helen Mears' letter in the last DISSENT. I still don't find any intellectual or political sustenance in her letter, but that was no reason to be nasty about it; and I wish to apologize to her.

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